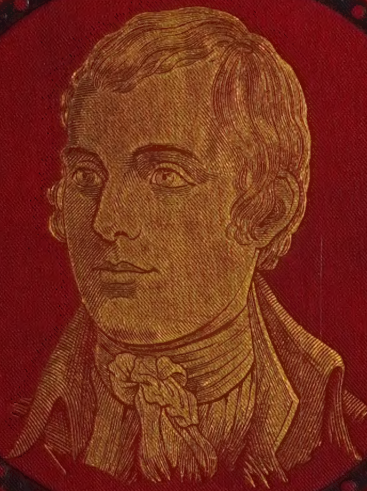


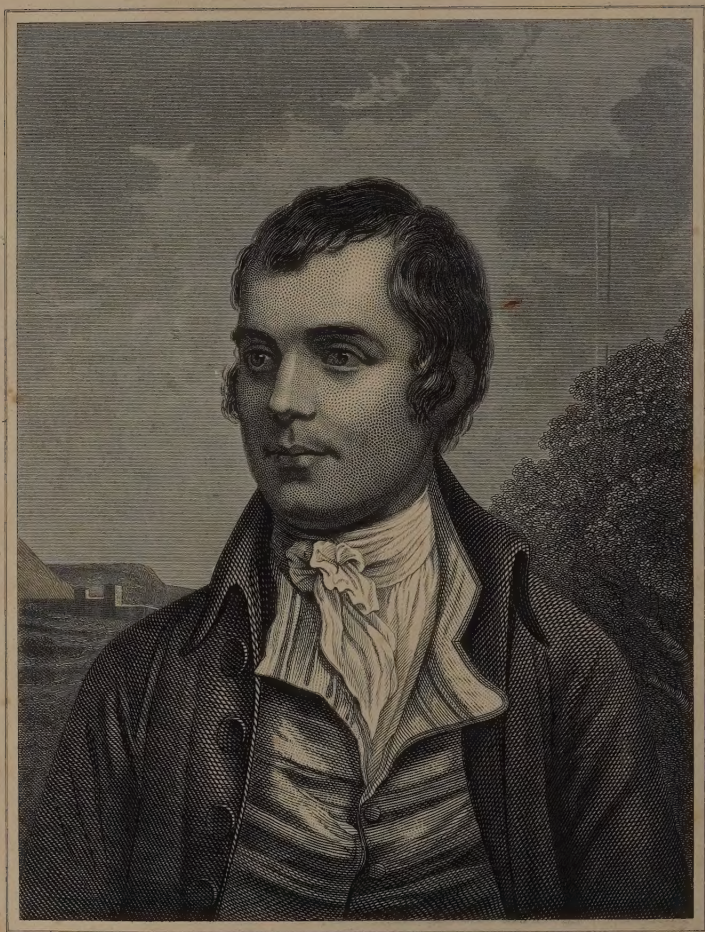
WORKS OF
ROBERT BURNS



ILLUSTRATED EDITION

D. Haddon





Nasmyth. Pinxt.

S. Allen Sc.

Robert Burns - Poet -

THE COMPLETE
WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS,

WITH LIFE AND NOTES BY

Allan Cunningham.

VOL. I.



Alloway Kirk.

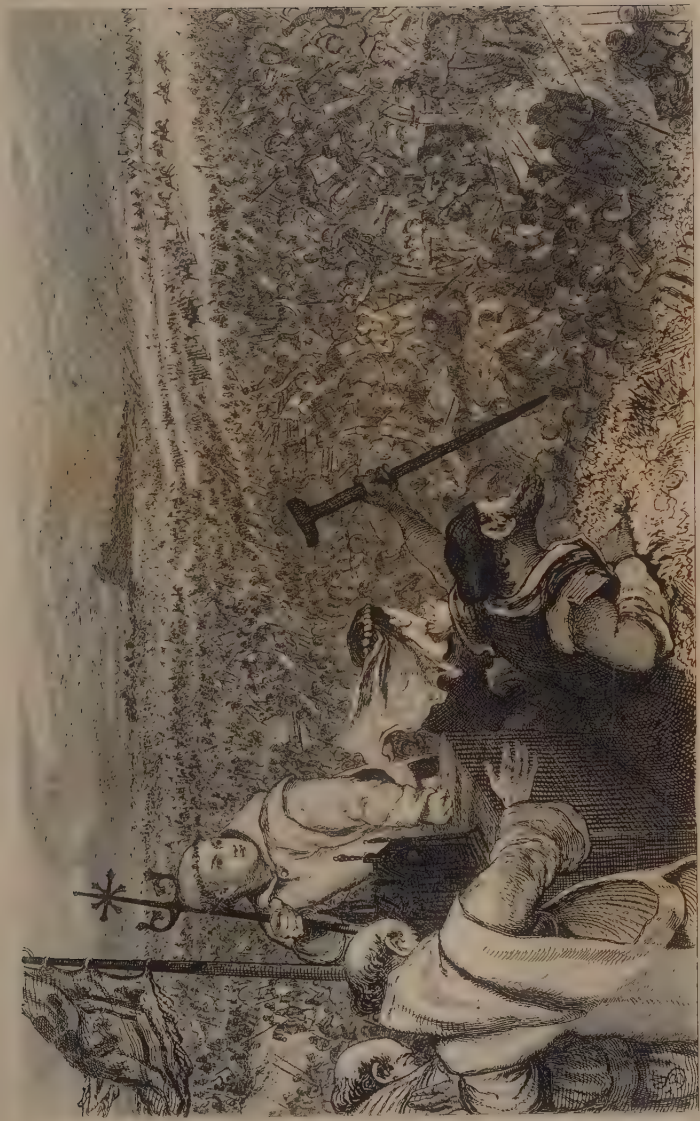
EDINBURGH, THOMAS C. JACK.



DRAWN & ETCHED BY W. B. SCOTT.

TAM O' SHANTER.

AND, WOW, TAM SAW AN UNCO SIGHT.

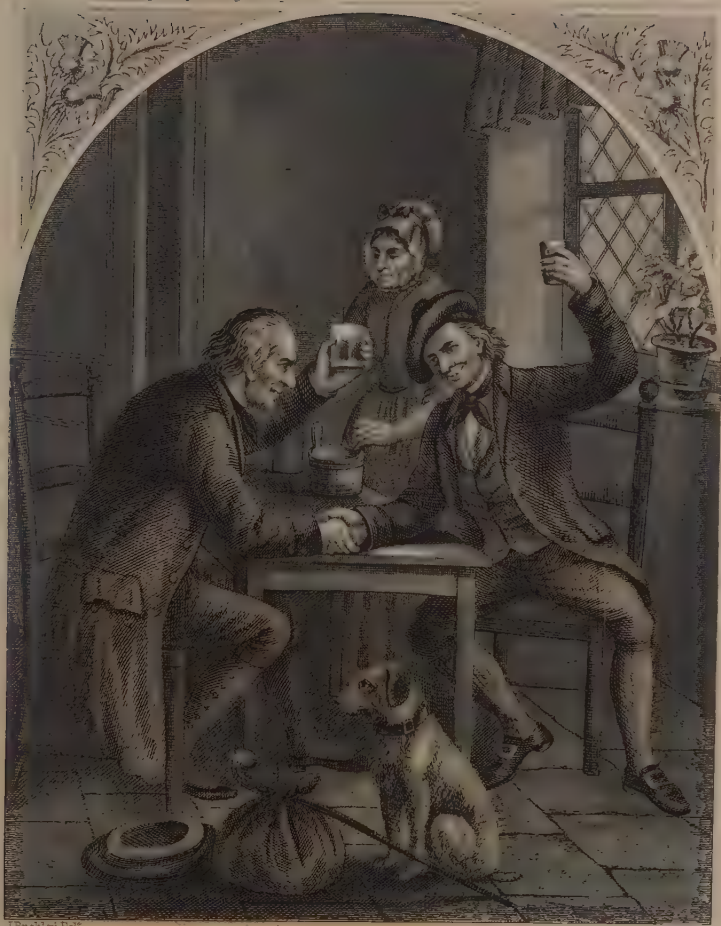


SCOTS WHA HAE

NOW: THE DAY AND NOW'S THE HOUR



BURNS AND HIGHLAND MARY PLEDGING TROTH



J. Brockley, Del.

S. P. n. S.



THE
COMPLETE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS

EDITED BY
ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

With Numerous Notes by

*LORD BYRON, THOMAS CAMPBELL, THOMAS CARLYLE,
LORD JEFFREY, T. LANDSEER, LOCKHART,
SIR WALTER SCOTT,
PROFESSOR WILSON, WORDSWORTH, &c. &c. &c.*

VOLUME I.

EDINBURGH
THOMAS C. JACK, GRANGE PUBLISHING WORKS
LONDON: 45 LUDGATE HILL

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

OF

THE LIFE OF BURNS.

WITH something of hope and fear, I offer this work to my country. I have endeavoured to relate the chequered fortunes, delineate the character, and trace the works of the Illustrious Peasant with candour and accuracy: his farming speculations—excise schemes—political feelings and poetic musings—are discussed with a fulness not common to biography: and his sharp lampoons and personal sallies are alluded to with all possible tenderness to the living, and respect for the dead. In writing the Poet's life, I have availed myself of his unpublished journals—private letters, manuscript verses, and of well-authenticated anecdotes and traits of character supplied by his friends; and I have arranged his works as much as might be in the order of their composition, and illustrated them with such notes, critical, historical and biographical, as seemed necessary. Of verse, one hundred and odd pieces will be found in this edition, which are not in Currie's octavos. The number of letters, too, is materially increased—but nothing is admitted which bears not the true Burns' stamp.

A. C.

BELGRAVE-PLACE,
January 1, 1834.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

WHEN this Memoir and chronological Edition of the works of Burns were first announced, a friend observed that the learned part of the world, he was afraid, might think they had enough of the Peasant Poet already, and look coldly on any attempt to associate him in beauty of embellishment and elegance of exterior with bards

“Far seen in Greek, deep men of letters.”

“My chief dread is,” I replied, “that my labours in the cause of the Poet may not be acceptable: I have no fear for Burns—he will take care of himself.” It has not happened otherwise with the Poet than I anticipated: nor have my own exertions been, it appears, unwelcome: six thousand copies of the Life have been disposed of, and a new edition is called for: I now give it to the world, with some of the errors in the first edition corrected, and all such new intelligence added as seemed useful and characteristic.

A. C.

BELGRAVE-PLACE,
September, 1835.

CHRONOLOGY

OF

BURNS'S LIFE AND WORKS.

1759.

January 26.—Born in a clay-built cottage, gifted by his father's own lands, on the banks of the Doon, in the district of Kyle, and county of Ayr. A few days after his birth a wind arose, that crushed the frail structure, and the unconscious Poet was carried unharmed to the shelter of a neighbouring house.

1765.—(etat 6.)

Sent by his father to a school at Alloway Mills—taught by one Campbell—same year placed under the care of Mr. Murdoch.

1766.—(7.)

May 25.—His father removes to the farm of Mount Oliphant, in the parish of Ayr, leased him by Mr. Ferguson, of Doonholm.

1768.—(9.)

In the absence of Murdoch, he is taught arithmetic in the winter evenings by his father, who instructs him also in the knowledge of History and Geography. On hearing Murdoch read the tragedy of Titus Andronicus, he is so shocked at the recital that he threatens to burn the book.

1769.—(10.)

The latent seeds of poetry cultivated in his mind by an old woman who resides in the family, and who had the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, witches, warlocks, apparitions, giants, enchanted towers, &c. The recital of these had so strong an effect on his imagination that for ever afterwards, in his nocturnal rambles, he kept a sharp look out in suspicious places.

1772.—(13.)

Sent to the Parish School of Dalrymple, for improvement in penmanship. Resumes his studies with Murdoch, in the town of Ayr. Revises his Grammar, and acquires a knowledge of French. Attempts the Latin, but makes little progress.

1773.—(14.)

Forms several connexions with other youngsters, who possess superior advantages, but who never insult the clatterly appearance of his plough-boy carcase, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inconveniences of the seasons. They give him stray volumes of books, and one (the late Sir John Malcolm), whose heart, not even the *Muney Begums* scenes have tainted, helped him to a little French. Parting with these young friends, as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, was often a sore affliction, but he is soon called to more serious evils. His father's farm proves a ruinous bargain, and, to clenish the misfortune, he falls into the hands of a scoundrelly factor, who afterwards sat for the picture he drew of one in his *Tale of The Two Dogs*. He becomes a dexterous ploughman for his age, but his indignation boils at the insolent threatening letters of the factor, which sets the family all in tears.

1774.—(15.)

Is the principal labourer in his father's farm—suffers great depression of spirits—is afflicted with head-ache in the evenings—forms his first attachment for Nelly Blair, a *bonnie sweet sonnie lass*, the tones of whose voice makes his heart-strings thrill like an *Æolian harp*. Composes his first song in praise of his *Handsome Nelly*.

1775.—(16.)

A Collection of Songs, his *vade mecum*—when he pores over, while driving his cart, or walking to labour, song by song, *verse by verse*, carefully noting the true tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. To this practice he owes much of his critic craft. Hitherto, he was, perhaps, the most ungainly, awkward boy in the parish—no *solitaire* less acquainted with the ways of the *W'rd*.

1776.—(17.)

He goes to a country dancing school to give his manners a brush, strongly against the wish of his father, who was subject to strong passions, and, from that instance of disobedience, took a sort of dislike to him which, he believes, was one cause of the apparent disposition which marked his succeeding years—the great misfortune of his life was to want an aim—the only two openings by which he can enter the temple of fortune are the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little cheating bargain-making. A constitutional melancholy makes him fly solitude, and he becomes a welcome guest wherever he visits—his greatest impulse is *un penchant pour l'adorable moitié du genre féminin*—his heart is completely tender, and eternally lighted up by some goddess or other. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, he fears no competitor, and spends his evenings after his own heart. His zeal, curiosity, and intrepid dexterity, recommend him as a confidant in all love adventures, and he is in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton.

1777.—(18.)

May 26.—His father removes to the farm of Loches. The young poet composes the ballad "My father was a farmer upon the Carrick towers," and the best of all his songs—"It was upon a Lammis night."

1778.—(19.)

Spends his nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast at a noted school in Kirkcubbin, where he learns mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., but makes a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. He falls in

occasionally with the smugglers, and learns to fill his glass and mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet he goes on with a high hand with his geometry, till the sun enters Virgo, a month always a carnival in his bosom, when a charming *Alletto*, who lives next door to the school, oversets all his trigonometry, and sets him off at a tangent from the sphere of his studies. Returns home considerably improved—engages several of his schoolfellows to keep up a literary correspondence—pores over a collection of Letters of the Wits of Queen Anne's reign.

1779.—(20.)

Five Pains, et vive la bagatelle, his sole principles of action—*Tristram Shandy* and the *Man of Feeling* his favourite books. Poetry the darling walk of his mind—usually half-a-dozen or more pieces on hand. His passions now rage like so many devils, till they find vent in rhyme. Composes "Winter, a Dirge," the eldest of his printed pieces—The Death of poor Maille, John Barleycorn, and several songs.

1780.—(21.)

November.—Forms, in conjunction with Gilbert, and seven or eight young men, a Bachelors' Club, in Tarbolton, the rules of which he afterwards draws up—the declared objects are—relaxation from toil—the promotion of sociability and friendship, and the improvement of the mind.

1781.—(22.)

Midsummer.—Partly through whim, and partly that he wishes to set about doing something in life, he joins a *fax-dresser* in Irvine, of the name of Peacock, a relation of his mother—where he spends six months learning the trade.

December 27.—Writes a remarkable letter to his father, in which he states that the weakness of his nerves has so debilitated his mind that he dares neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity. He is quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, he shall bid adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life; or he is heartily tired of it, and, if he does not very much deceive himself, he cannot contentedly and gladly resign it. He concludes by saying, "My meal is nearly out, but I am going to borrow till I get more."

December 31.—His ship accidentally catches fire, as he is giving a welcome carouse to the new year, and is burned to ashes, and, like a true poet, he is left without a sixpence.

1782.—(23.)

The clouds of misfortune gather thick round his father's head, and he is visibly far gone in consumption. To crown the distress of the poet, a *belle Allie*, whom he adores, and who had pledged her soul to meet him in the field of matrimony, jilts him, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. His constitutional melancholy is now increased to such a degree that for three months he is in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—*depart from me, ye accursed!* His former a friendship with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune, whose mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every mailed virtue. He was the only man he ever saw who was a greater fool than himself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of *lillic love* with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto he had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did him a mischief, and the consequence was, that soon after he resumed the plough, he wrote "The Poet's Welcome to his Illegitimate Child." Meeting with *Fergusson's Scottish Poems*, he strings anew his wildly-sounding lyre.

1783.—(24.)

April.—Commences his Common Place Book, entitled: "Observations, Hints, Scraps of Poetry, &c." By Robert Burns; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it.

June 21.—Writes to his cousin, James Burness, that his father is in a dying condition; and sends, probably for the last time in this world, his warmest wishes for his welfare and happiness—He becomes a Free Mason, being his first introduction to the life of a boon companion.

1784.—(25.)

January.—Writes his "First Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet." In which he underlines his *Darling* again. The first idea of his becoming an Author started on this occasion.

February 13.—Death of his Father: whose all went among the hell-hounds and grovel in the kennel of Justice. He makes shift to collect a little money in the family; and he and his brother Gilbert take the neighbouring farm of Mossiel, on which he enters with a full resolution, *Come, go to, I will be wits!*—He reads farming books, calculates crops, attends markets; and, in spite of the *devil*, the *world*, and the *flesh*, he believes he would have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, they lost half their crops. This overcast all his wisdom, and he returns, *like the dog to his kennel, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*. He now begins to be known in the neighbourhood as a quaker of rhymes, and the first of his poetic offspring that saw the light was *The Holy Tulzie* or *Two Herds*, a burlesque upon imitation of a numeral between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in his *Holy Fair*. *Holy Willie's Prayer* next makes its appearance, and alarms the Kirk-session so much that they hold several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery. Unluckily for him, his wanderings lead him on another side, within point blank shot of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to his printed poem, *The Lammie*. He is compelled to perform penance in church—invigilates against the clergyman for rebuking him—writes his "Epistle to Raskine" and his song "The Ranting Dog the Daddie o'."

CHRONOLOGY.

1785.—(ælat 26.)

Exposures the cause of Gavin Hamilton against the Auld Light Fanatics, and produces, in succession, *The Kirk's Alarm*, *The Ignorance*, *The Holy Fair*, &c.—His *Address to the Deaf, and Deaf and Deaf Hornbook*.

April 21.—Writes his *Epistles to Lapraik*, and, in the course of the year, *Hallowe'en*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *The Collier's Saturday Night*, and various songs.

1786.—(27.)

March 20.—Encloses Mr. Robert Muir, Kilmarnock, his *Scott's Drink*, with a wish that it may follow, with a blessing, for his education.

April 3.—Writes to Mr. Aiken that his proposals for publishing by subscription, he is just going to send to press, and signs his name, for the last time—*Burnes*.

April 20.—Encloses Mr. John Kennedy, his Mountain *Dale* (entitled in the MS. *The Gowan*), as being the very latest of his productions, and composed while holding the plough.—His connexion with his bonnie Jean. She presents him with *Twins*—Anger of her father—The distress of the Poet—Performs penance a second time in the Kirk for his incontinency—is called upon to find security for the maintenance of his children—Is unable to raise the money, and the alternative is expatriation, or a jail—Prefers the former.

August 1.—Publishes the first Edition of his Poems—Realizes above 20*l*., and takes out his passage for Jamaica—Composes the last song he believes he shall ever measure in Caledonia. The Gloomy Night is gathering fast; when a letter from Dr. Blair looks fortunately arrives, which overthrows all his schemes, by opening new prospects to his poetic ambition. His poems everywhere received with rapture—Cultivates friendship with Professor David Stewart, Dr. Blair, Dr. Robertson, Dr. Gregory, Mrs. Dunlop, &c.—Visits Kilmorie, the seat of Dugald Stewart, where he meets Lord Daer, and Mrs. Stewart of Stair, whom he celebrates in his Song, *Flow gently, sweet Afton*—Composes the *Lass of Ballochmyle*, and forwards it to the heroine, Miss Alexander—Is treated by her with coldness, which he resents with bitterness.

November 28.—Arrives in Edinburgh.

1787.—(28.)

January 7.—Writes to Gavin Hamilton that he feels a miserable blank in his heart, from the want of his bonnie Jean. "I don't think," he says, "I shall ever meet with so delicious an armful again. She has her faults; but so have you and I; and so has every body."

January 14.—Attends a Grand Masonic Lodge, &c.—Received with acclamation as the Bard of Caledonia—Reads a with his friend Richmond, in the house of Mrs. Cairnes, Lawmarket, in a single room, at the rent of 3*s*. a week—Meets the Duchess of Gordon, and his conversation completely carries her off her feet.

April 4.—Publishes the second Edition of his Poems, of which 3000 copies are subscribed for—Commences his second Common Place Book.

May 6.—Sets out, on a Border Tour, in company with Robert Ainslie, Esq.—Presented by the Magistracy of Jedburgh with the freedom of the town—his reception every where triumphant.

May 18.—Visits Dryburgh Abbey, and spends an hour among the ruins, since hallowed by the dust of Scott.

June 8.—Returns to Mossgiel—The family of his bonnie Jean now court his society—Returns to Edinburgh, where he obtains permission to erect a tombstone over the grave of Enoch, the architect who was two years in completing it, and the Poet was two years in paying him; for which they are quits. "He had," says the Poet, "the hardihood to ask for interest on the sum, but considering that the money was due by one Poet, for putting a tombstone over another, he may with grateful surprise, thank heaven that ever he saw a farthing of it." Proceeds on his first Highland Tour, by way of Stirling, to Inverary—Visits the Harlequin Indians, and becomes acquainted with Miss Chalmers.

July.—Spends this month at Mossgiel—Writes his *Epistle to Willie Chalmers*.

August.—Re-visits Stirling-shire, in company with Dr. Adair of Harrogate—Visits the ruined Abbey of Dunfermline—Kneels down and kisses with sacred fervour the stone which covers the grave of Robert Bruce—Shewn at Linlithgow the room where the beautiful and injured Mary Queen of Scots was born—Crosses the Forth, and arrives in Edinburgh.

August 25.—Sets out on his third and last Highland Tour, in company with his friend Nicol—Visits the Duke and Duchess of Gordon—Dines with them, and forgets his friend Nicol, who, in a flaming rage, induces the Poet reluctantly to turn his back on *bonnie Castle Gordon*, with a vexation he was unable to conceal.

September 16.—Arrives at Edinburgh, having travelled 600 miles in 22 days—Composes verses on Loch Turit, and Bruar Water—Forms an intimacy with Clarinda—is overtaken in a hackney-coach, by a drunken constable, and is obliged to give him 50*s*., to get his bruised limb—Writes his celebrated Letters to Clarinda—Contributes numerous Songs to Johnson's Musical Museum.

December 30.—Writes to his friend Brown that Almighty love still reigns in his bosom; and that he is at this moment ready to hang himself for a young Edinburgh *Midwife*. (She turns out to be a married lady, whose husband is absent in Jamaica.)

December 31.—Attends a grand ball, to celebrate the birth of Prince Charles Stuart, and produces an Ode on the occasion.

1788.—(29.)

March 30.—Composes (partly on horseback) *The Chevalier's Lament*. April 13.—Settles with his Publisher, Creech, and receives upwards of 600*l*., as the produce of his Poems—Writes his *Address to his brother Gilbert*; but, when afterwards solicited to become bail for him to a considerable amount, he is compelled to decline in justice to his family.

May 25.—Takes the farm of Ellisland.

August 3.—Marries his bonnie Jean, and contributes many of his best Songs to the Museum.

1789.—(30.)

July.—Receives an Epistle, part Poetic and part prosaic, from a young Poetess, Miss Janet Little, which he does not well know how to answer, being no dab at such things.

September.—Writes the noblest of all his ballads, "To Mary in Heaven," Lines on *Friar's-Carse Hermitage*, &c.

October 16.—Contends for the prize of "The Whistle," at *Friar's-Carse*—Drinks health for bottle in the Contest, and celebrates the occasion by a Poem.

December 30.—Writes to Provost Maxwell that his poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedevilled with the task of the superlatively damned, to make one *guinea* do the work of three, that he detests, abhors, and swoons at, the very name of business.

1790.—(31.)

January 25.—Communicates to Mrs. Dunlop some interesting particulars of the life and death of Falconer, the unfortunate author of the *Shipwreck*—Finds his farm a ruinous affair—His "nerves in a cursed state," and a horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul—Resumes his intercourse with the Muse, and writes in November his inimitable *Tam o' Shanter*, the best of all his productions—is appointed to the Excise—Has an adventure with Ramsay of Ochtertyre.

1791.—(32.)

April 11.—Birth of a third son—Becomes a member of the Dumfries Volunteers, and their Port Laureate—Writes several patriotic Songs, and his "Scots who hae wi' Wallace bled"—Fires off his "Five Carlines," and other Political Squibs, and satirizes both Whigs and Tories—Visited in the summer by two English gentlemen, who dine with him, and partake freely of his Whiskey Punch—They forget the flight of time; lose their way on returning to Dumfries, and can scarcely count its three steeples, although assisted by the morning dawn.

August 25.—Sells his crop at a guinea, an acre above value—A strange case of drunkenness on the occasion—About 30 people engaged in a regular battle, every man for his own hand, and fight it out for three hours—in doors full lying drunk on the floor, and decanting out their dogs and swine attending them, but they stand firm to the scene—Relinquishes Ellisland, and removes to Dumfries—is invited by the Earl of Buchan to assist at the coronation of the bust of Thomson, on the 23rd of September—Apologizes, but sends an Ode for the occasion—Presented by Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable with a valuable snuff-box, on the lid of which is a miniature of Mary Queen of Scots, as an acknowledgment for his "Lament 'o' that ill-starred Princess."

1792.—(33.)

February 27.—Puts himself at the head of a party of soldiers, and captures, sword in hand, a French Smuggler—Communicates to Francis Grose, Esq., the celebrated Antiquary, three remarkable Witch Stories relating to Alloway Kirk.

September.—Commences his celebrated Correspondence with George Thomson, and composes for his Collection of Scottish Songs upwards of one hundred and twenty of the finest lyrics in the language.

September 10.—Writes a remarkable letter to his friend Alexander Cunningham, in which he gives him his ideas of the conjugal state. Ah, my friend! matrimony is quite a different thing from what your love-sick youths and sighing girls take it to be!

December 8.—Birth of his Daughter.

1793.—(34.)

Publishes a Fourth Edition of his Poems, in 2 vols.—Makes an excursion through Galloway and the neighbouring country, in company with Syme of Ryelaid, the same who related to Sir Walter Scott his story of the Swallow-Cat—Continues pouring out his songs, and sends to the Museum of Johnson—Admonished by the Excise that his business is to act, not to think, in allusion to his political opinions—Rejects the offer of an Annuity of 50*l*. to write Poetical Articles for the Morning Chronicle.

December.—Writes to Mr. Macmurdoo that he does not owe a shilling to either man or woman.

1794.—(35.)

February 25.—Writes to Alexander Cunningham commencing with these words:—"Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?" and stating that for two months he has been unable to wield the pen.

May.—Publishes a Fifth Edition of his Poems, finally corrected with his own hand.

At Niddummar he removes from the Bank Vennel, Dumfries, to Mill Hill Brae.

June 25.—Writes to Mrs. Dunlop from a solitary Inn, in a solitary village, in Caithness Douglas, that he is in poor health, and that he is afraid he is about to suffer for the follies of his youth.—His medical friends threaten him with a dying cough, but he trusts they are mistaken.

1795.—(36.)

January.—Writes his manly song "For a' that and a' that." In the Autumn he loses his only daughter—Writes his *Heron Ballads*.

In November he is visited by Professor Walker, who spends two days with him, and writes a description of the Poet's appearance.

December 29.—Writes to Mrs. Dunlop that he already begins to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast over his frame.

1796.—(37.)

January 3.—Becomes the victim of a severe Rheumatic Fever—Rack'd with pain—Every face he meets with a greeting like that of *Blak to Balaam*: "Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy me Israel."—Implores his friends in Edinburgh to be so good as to interest with the Excise to grant him his full Salary—His application refused.

July 6.—Affecting interview with Mrs. Riddel at Brow.

July 7.—Writes to his friend Cunningham:—"I feel the voice of the Bard will soon be heard among you no more! You actually would not know me. Pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair—My spirits fled, and I—Goes to Brow for the benefit of sea air."

July 12.—Writes to George Thomson for Five Pounds, and to his cousin James Burgess for Ten Pounds, to save him from the horrors of a jail.—Sends his last letter to Mrs. Dunlop, in which he says, "I am sorry, but he will be beyond that *bourne whence no traveller returns*."

July 18.—Returns to Dumfries in a dying state—His good humour is unruined, and his wit never before forsakes him. He looks to one of his brother Volunteers with a smile, as he stood weeping by his bedside, and says, "John, don't let the awkward squad ere over me!"

July 21.—His Death.

His body was removed to the Town Hall of Dumfries, where they lie in state, and his funeral takes place on the following day.

J. C.

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Afton Water.

I

Key F. *Slow, with feeling.*

{ s₁ | d | m | r d | r m | f | m r | d | m | r d | d | t₁ | s₁ | d | m | r d }

{ Flow | gent - ly, | sweet | Af - ton, | a - | mong thy | green | braes, | Flow | gent - ly, | I'll }

{ r m | s | d₁ l | s | f m | r m | d | — | s l | t^{af} | s f | m r | r | m | s }

{ sing | thee | a | song | in | thy | praise; | My | Ma | ry's | a - | sleep | by | thy }

Key B $\flat$.

{ s₁ | d | m | r d | d | t₁ | s₁ | d | m | r d | r m | s | d₁ l | s | f m | r m | d | — }

{ mur - mur - ing | stream, | Flow | gent - ly, | sweet | Af - ton, | dis - | turb | not | her | dream. }

Key F.

Thou stock-dove, whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den;
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear—
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton! thy neighbouring hills,
Far mark'd with the courses of clear winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow!
There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Flow gently, sweet Afton! among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton! disturb not her dream.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides!
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides!
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flow'rets she stems thy clear wave!

A red, red Rose.

2

Key C. *Moderato.*

{ s₁ m | d | d | r | m | d₁ | t | l | s | l | s | l | d₁ | r | d₁ | r | m | d | d | r | m | d₁ | t | l | s }

{ O, my | luv'e is like | a red, red rose | That's | newly sprung in | June: | O, my | luv'e's | like the | melo-die | That's }

{ l | s | l | t | d₁ | s | d₁ | m₁ | r₁ | d₁ | l | d₁ | s | m | s | s | f₁ | m₁ | m₁ | r₁ | s₁ | f₁ }

{ sweet - ly | play'd in | tune. | As | fair art thou, my | bonnie lass, | So | deep | in luv'e am | I, | And }

{ m₁ | s₁ | m₁ | d₁ | l | d₁ | s | m | s | s | l | t | d₁ | s | d | d | r | m | d₁ | t | l | s }

{ I | will | luv'e thee | still, my dear, | Till | a' the | seas gang dry, | Till | a' the | seas | gang dry, | my dear, | Till }

{ l | s | l | d₁ | m₁ | r₁ | d₁ | r | m₁ | d | d | r | m | d₁ | t | l | s | l | s | l | t | d₁ | — }

{ a' | the seas gang dry, | And | I | will luv'e | thee still, | my dear, | Till | a' | the seas | gang dry. }

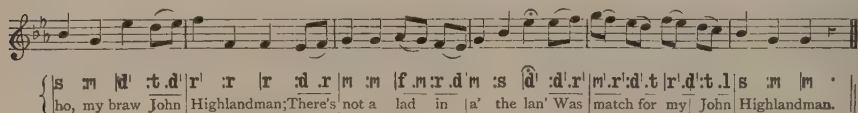
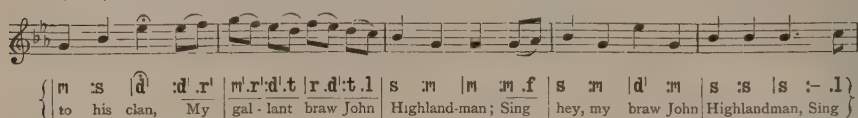
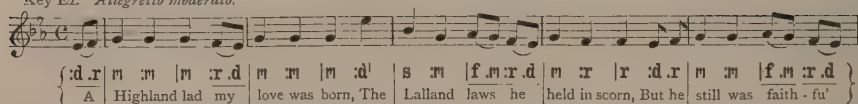
Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will luv'e thee still, my dear,
While the sands of life shall run.

And fare-thee-weel, my only luv'e!
And fare-thee-weel a-while!
And I will come again, my luv'e,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

A Highland lad my love was born.

3

Key E $\flat$. *Allegretto moderato.*



With his philabeg an' tartan plaid,
An' guid claymore down by his side,
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant brow John Highlandman.
Sing hey, etc.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But, ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman
Sing hey, etc.

We ranged a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' liv'd like lords and ladies gay;
For a Lalland face he feared nane,
My gallant brow John Highlandman.
Sing hey, etc.

But, oh, they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast;
My curse upon them every one,
They've hang'd my brow John Highlandman.
Sing hey, etc.

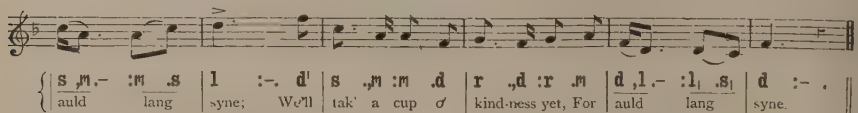
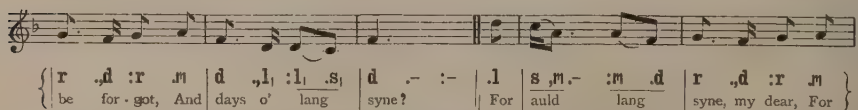
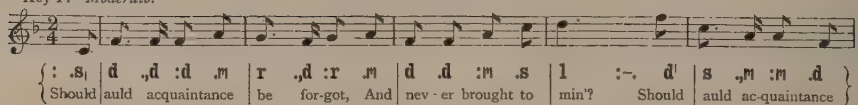
And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return;
Nae comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman
Sing hey, etc



Auld lang syne.

4

Key F. *Moderato.*



We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we've wandered mony a weary foot,
Sin auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne, etc.

And here's a hand, my trusty here,
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak' a right guid willie-waught,
For auld lang syne!
For auld lang syne, etc.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,
Frae mornin' sun till dune;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd,
Sin auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne. etc.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup,
And surely I'll be mine;
And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne, etc.

The Banks o' Doon.

5

Key G. *With feeling.*

{ :s: | d :- d | r :- d r | m :s m | r :- d r | m :- r d | d :l: | s: | s: -l: d | r :- m r }

{ Ye | banks and braes | o' | Bon - nie Doon, How | can | ye bloom sae | fresh and fair; | How }

{ d :- d | r :- d r | m :s m | r :- d r | m :- r d | d :l: | s: | s: -l: d | d :- }

{ can | ye chant | ye | lit - - - tle | birds, And | I | 'sae | wea - - ry | fu' | o' care. }

{ :m | s :- l | s :- m d | s :- l | s m d | s :- m d | s m d | l :- s m r :- m r }

{ Thou'll | break | my heart, thou | warb - ling bird, That | wan - tons thro' | the | flow'r-ing thorn: | Thou }

{ d :- d | r :- d r | m :- s m | r :- d r | m :- r d | d :l: | s: | s: -l: d | d :- }

{ minds | me | o' | de - part - - ed | joys, - De - | part - - ed | ne - - ver | to | re - turn! }

Oft has I rovd by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine
And ilka bird sang o' its luvie,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause luvie stole my rose,
But, ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

The Bannocks o' Barley.

6

Key D. *Lively.*

{ d d m | r r m r | d d r m f | s :l d | d d m | r r m r }

{ Ban - nocks o' | bear meal and | ban - nocks o' | bar - - ley; | Here's to the | High - land - man's }

{ d d r m f | s :l d | d' :s m | r r' t | d' :s m | d' :- r' m' }

{ 'ban - nocks o' | bar - - ley, | Wha in a | brul - zie will | first cry a | par - ley? }

{ l d' l | s m | s r f m r | d d r m f | s :l d | d d m | r r m r }

{ Ne - ver the | lads wi' the | ban - nocks o' | bar - - ley, | Ban - nocks o' | bear meal and }

{ d d r m f | s :l d | d d m | r r m r | d d r m f | s :l d | }

{ 'ban - nocks o' | bar - - ley; | Here's to the | High - land - man's | ban - nocks o' | bar - - ley. }

(Begin second verse at sign S.)

Wha in his wae days
Were loyal to Charlie?
Wha but the lads wi'
The bannocks o' barley.

Bannocks o' bear meal,
Bannocks o' barley;
Here's to the Highlandman's
Bannocks o' barley.

The Birks of Aberfeldy.

7

Key D. *With animation.*

{ d ,r m :s | d' ,r' :d' .l | d' ,r' :d' .l | t,d,r' :d',r' m' | d ,r m :s | d' ,r' :m' .r' }
 { Bon-nie las-sie, will ye go? | Will ye go? will ye go? Bon-nie las-sie, will ye go To the }

{ d' ,l :s .m | r :l' || :s | d ,r :m .d' | s .d :m .d' }
 { birks of A - ber - fel - dy? | Now sim - mer blinks on flow - 'ry braes, And }

{ s ,d m :s | l,s f m r ,m | d ,r m :s | d' ,r' :m' .r' | d' ,l :s .m | r :l' } *D.C.*
 { o'er the crys-tal streamlet plays: Come | let us spend the lightsome days In the | birks of A - ber - fel - dy. }

While o'er their heads the hazels hing,
 The little birdies blithely sing,
 Or lightly fit on wanton wing,
 In the birks of Aberfeldy.

The braes ascend, like lofty wa's,
 The foaming stream deep-roaring fa's,
 O'erhung wi' fragrant spreading shaws,
 The birks of Aberfeldy.

The hoary cliffs are crown'd wi' flowers,
 White o'er the linn the burnie pours,
 And rising, weets wi' misty showers
 The birks of Aberfeldy.

Let fortune's gifts at random flee,
 They ne'er shall draw a wish frae me,
 Supremely blest wi' love and thee,
 In the birks of Aberfeldy.

Blithe was She.

8

Key G. *Lively.*

{ m :l ,t | r ,r,- :t,s,- | m :l ,t | r ,t,- :l | m :l ,t | r ,r :t | s, }
 { Blithe, blithe, and mer-ry was she, | Blithe was she, but and ben; | Blithe by the banks of Ern, And }

{ m :l ,t | r ,t,- :l | :t | s, :s :s ,l | s ,m r ,s | m ,l,- :l ,t | l .s .m .s }
 { blithe in Glen- tur-it glen. | By Auch-ter - tyre | grows the aik, On Yar-row banks the bir - ken shaw; But }

{ r ,m :s ,l | s ,m r ,s | m ,s r ,t | r ,t,- :l | m :l ,t | r ,r,- :t,s,- }
 { Phe-mie was a bon-nier lass Than braes o' Yar - row e - ver saw. | Blithe, blithe, and mer-ry was she }

{ m :l ,t | r ,t,- :l | m :l ,t | r ,r :t | s, | m :l ,t | r ,t,- :l | }
 { Blithe was she, but and ben; | Blithe by the banks of Ern, And blithe in Glen- tur - it glen. }

(Begin succeeding verses at mark S.)

Her looks were like a flow'r in May,
 Her smile was like a simmer morn;
 She tripped by the banks of Ern,
 As light's a bird upon a thorn.
 Blithe, blithe, etc.

Her bonnie ace it was as meek
 As any lamb upon a lee;
 The evening sun was ne'er sae sweet
 As was the blink o' Phe-mie's ee.
 Blithe, blithe, etc.

The Highland hills I've wander'd wide,
 And o'er the Lowlands I hae been;
 But Phe-mie was the blithest lass
 That ever trod the dewy green.
 Blithe, blithe, etc.

Bruce's Address to his Army at Bannockburn.

9

Key B♭.

Tune—"Hey, tuttie taitie."

{ S₁ „ S₁ :S₁ „ M₁ S₁ „ l₁ :d | l₁ „ l₁ :l₁ „ S₁ l₁ „ t₁ :d „ r m „ m :r „ d }

{ d „ r :M | d „ l₁ :l₁ „ S₁ S₁ :— | M „ M :M „ r m „ f :S }

{ r „ r :r „ d r „ m :f | s „ m :r „ d d „ r :m d „ l₁ :l₁ „ S₁ S₁ :— }

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw;
Free-man stand, or free-man fa'?
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do, or die!

The Braes o' Ballochmyle.

10

Key B♭. *Andante affettuoso.*

{ :S₁ d :—:S₁ | d :—:r m :—:f s :—:f m :r :d d :—:t₁ :l₁ | r :—:d :t₁ :l₁ }

{ S₁ :—:S₁ d :—:S₁ | d :—:r m :—:f s :—:f m :r :d l :—:s :f m :—:f :r d :—: }

{ :S l :—:f f :m :r s :—:f m :r d :t₁ :d r :—:r r :m :d t₁ :—:d :l₁ }

{ S₁ :—:S₁ d :—:S₁ | d :—:r m :—:f s :—:f m :r :d l :—:s :f m :—:f :r d :—: }

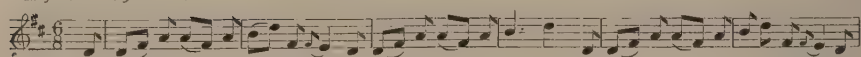
Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in with'ring bowers,
Again ye'll charm the vocal air.
But here, alas! for me nae mair
Shall birdie charm, or floweret smile;
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr,
Fareweel, fareweel, sweet Ballochmyle!

Come boat me o'er to Charlie.

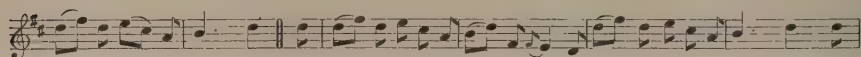
11

Key D. *Lively.*

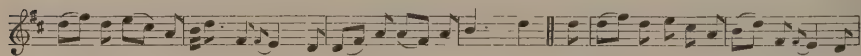
Tune—"O'er the water to Charlie."



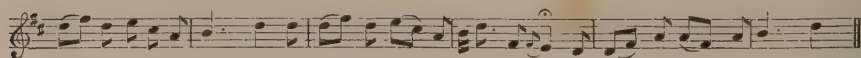
{ d' d' m' s | s m' s l : d' m' r : - d d' m' s | s m' s l : - d' : - d d' m' s | s m' s l : d' m' r : - d }
{ Come boat me o'er, Come row me o'er, Come boat me o'er to Charlie; I'll gie John Ross an' other bawbee, To }



{ d' m' d' r' t : s l : - d' : - d' d' m' d' r' t : s l : d' m' r : - d d' m' d' r' t : s l : - d' : - d' }
{ boat me o'er to Char - lie, We'll o'er the water and o'er the sea, We'll o'er the water to Char - lie; Come }



{ d' m' d' r' t : s l d' : - m' r : - d d' m' s | s m' s l : - d' : - d' d' m' d' r' t : s l : d' m' r : - d }
{ weal, comewoe, we'll gather and go, And live or die wi' Char - lie. We'll o'er the water and o'er the sea, We'll }



{ d' m' d' r' t : s l : - d' : - d' d' m' d' r' t : s l d' : - m' r : - d d' m' s | s m' s l : - d' : - }
{ o'er the water to Char - lie; Come weal, comewoe, we'll gather and go, And live or die wi' Char - lie. }

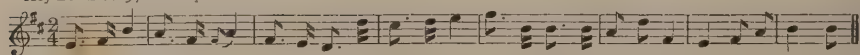
It's weel I lo'e my Charlie's name,
Tho' some there be abhor him;
But O, to see auld Nick gaun hame,
And Charlie's faes before him!
We'll o'er the water, etc.

I swear and vow by moon and stars,
And sun that shines so early,
If I had twenty thousand lives,
I'd die as aft for Charlie.
We'll o'er the water, etc.

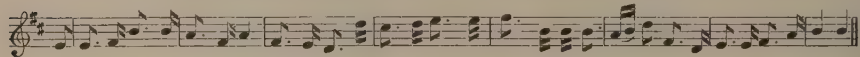
Ca' the Ewes.

12

Key D. *Slowly, with expression.*



{ r m' l | s m' m' s m r d d' t d' r' | m l l | l s d' m r m s l : l }
{ Ca' the ewes ' to the knowes, Ca' them whare the heather grows, Ca' them whare the burnie rowes My bonnie dearie! }



{ r r m' l | l s m' s m r d d' t d' r' | r' m' l : l l s l d' m d' r r' m s l : l }
{ As I gaed down the w'ater side, There I met my shepherd lad, He row'd me sweetly in his plaid And he ca'd me hi-dearie! }

Will ye gang down the water-side,
And see the waves sae sweetly glide,
Beneath the hazels spreading wide?
The moon it shines fu' clearly.
Ca' the ewes, etc.

I was bred up at nae sic school,
My shepherd lad, to play the fool,
And a' the day to sit in dool,
And naeboddy to see me.
Ca' the ewes, etc.

Ye sall get gowns and ribbons meet,
Cauld leather shoon upon your feet,
And in my arms ye'se lie and sleep,
And ye sall be my dearie.
Ca' the ewes, etc.

If ye'll but stand to what ye've said,
I'se gang wi' you, my shepherd lad,
And ye may rowe me in your plaid,
And I sall be your dearie.
Ca' the ewes, etc.

While waters wimple to the sea;
While day blinks in the lift sae hie;
"Till clay-cauld death sall blin' my e'e,
Ye sall be my dearie.
Ca' the ewes, etc.

Dainty Davie.

13

Key D. *Lively.*

{ d' s :-f m r m d :l | d :-m d :s m f s m d :s f m d' | s :-f m r m }

{ Now ro - sy May comes in wi' flow'rs To deck her gay green ispreading bow'rs, And now comes in my }

{ d :l | d :-r m :d' | m' r' d' t | l :-t d' | :s d' m' | d' r' m' | d' r' m' f' | m' r' d' }

{ hap - py hours, To wan - der wi' my Da - vie. The . crys - tal wa - ters round us fa', The }

{ t :r' | s :r' | t d' :r' m' | r' :d' t | d' :-r' | m' r' m' | f' m' :r' d' | t :l s }

{ mer - ry birds are lov - - ers a', The scent - ed breez - es round us blow, A }

{ l t d' r' | m' r' d' t | l :-t d' : | s :-f m r m d :l | d : | d :s m f s m }

{ wand'r - ing wi' my Da - vie. Meet me on the war - lock knowe, Dain - ty Da - vie, }

{ d :s f | m :d' | s :-f m r m | d :l | d :-r m :d' | m' r' d' t | l :-t d' : }

{ dain - ty Da - vie, There I'll spend the day wi' you, My ain dear dain - ty Da - vie! }

When purple morning starts the hare,
To steal upon her early fare,
Then thro' the dew's I will repair,
To meet my faithfu' Davie.

When day, expiring in the west,
The curtain draws o' nature's rest,
I flee to his arms I lo'e best,
And that's my ain dear Davie.

Meet me on the warlock knowe,
Bonnie Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
My ain dear dainty Davie.

The Deil's awa wi' th' Exciseman.

14

Key F. *Lively.*

{ d | d :-s s l s | s f m r m f | s :-d d d r | m :- | s :-d d :-s l s }

{ The deil cam' fid - dling thro' the town, And danc'd awa wi' th' Ex - cise - man; And il - kawife cries, }

{ s f m r m f | s :-d d d r | m :- | s :- | s | m :-r m | d :-r m | r :-d r | s :-s }

{ Auld Ma-houn, I wish you luck o' the prize, man! " The deil's a - wa, The deil's a - wa, The }

{ d :-d d d r | m :- | s :-s f | m :-r m | d :-r m | r :-d r | s :-t | d' :-d d d r | m :- | s :- }

{ deil's awa with Ex - cise - man; He's danc'd a - wa, he's danc'd a - wa, He's danc'd awa wi' th' Ex - cise - man! }

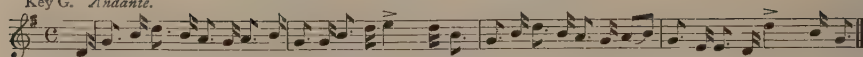
We'll mak our maut, we'll brew our drink,
We'll dance, and sing, and rejoice man;
And many braw thanks to the meikle black deil,
That danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman.
The deil's awa, etc.

There's threesome reels, there's foursome reels,
There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man;
But the ae best dance e'er cam to the land
Was—the deil's awa wi' th' Exciseman
The deil's awa, etc.

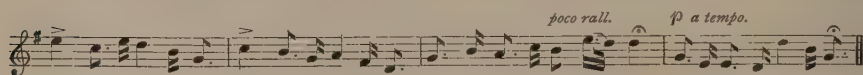
For the sake o' Somebody.

15

Key G. *Andante.*



{ :s₁ :d :m :s :m | r :d :r :m | d :d :m :s | l :s :m :d :m :s :m | r :d :r :m | d :l :l :s₁ :s :m :d : }
 { My | heart is sair, I dare na tell, My | heart is sair for somebody, | I could wake a winter's night | For the sake o' some - body. }



{ l :f :l | s :m :d : } { f :m :d | r :t₁ :s₁ : } { d :m :r :f | m :l :s :s₁ : } { d :l :l :s₁ :s :m :d : }
 { Oh - hon for some - body, | Oh - hey for some - body, | I could range the world a - round | For the sake o' some - body. }

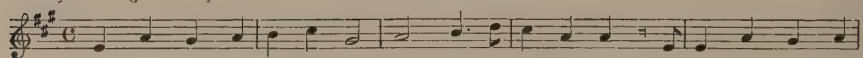
Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,
 O, sweetly smile on somebody,
 Frae ilka danger keep him free,
 And send me safe my somebody.
 Oh-hon, for somebody,
 Oh-hey, for somebody,
 I wad do—what wad I not?
 For the sake o' somebody.



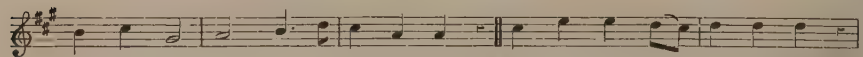
Duncan Gray.

16

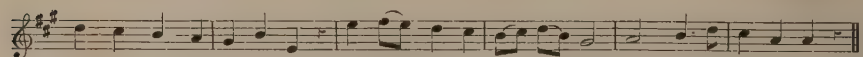
Key A. *Allegretto con spirilo.*



{ s₁ :d | t₁ :d | r :m | t₁ :d :r :f | m :d | d :s₁ | s₁ :d | t₁ :d : }
 { Dun - can Gray cam' | here to woo, | Ha, ha, the | woo - ing o't; | On | blithe yule night when }



{ r :m | t₁ :d :r :f | m :d | d :m :s | s :f | m :f :f | f : }
 { we were fou, | Ha, ha, the | woo - ing o't. | Mag - gie coost her | head fu' high, }



{ f :m | r :d | t₁ :r | s₁ :s :l :s | f :m | r :m :f | r :t₁ :d :r :f | m :d | d : }
 { Look'd a-skent and | un - co skeigh, | Gart poor Duncan | stand a - beigh; | Ha, ha, the | woo-ing o't. }

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
 Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
 Spak' o' lowpin o'er a linn;
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Time and chance are but a tide,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Slighted love is sair to bide,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
 For a haughty hizzie die?
 She may gae to—France for me!
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

How it comes let doctors tell,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Meg grew sick—as he grew heal,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Something in her bosom wrings,
 For relief a sigh she brings;
 And O, her een, they spak' sic things
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Maggie's was a piteous case,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Duncan couldna be her death,
 Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath;
 Now they're crouse and canty baith,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

THE LIFE OF ROBERT BURNS.

PART I.—AYR-SHIRE.

THE national poetry of Scotland, like her thistle, is the offspring of the soil. To the poems of our first James, the strains of forgotten minstrels, or the inspiration of shepherds and husbandmen, its origin has been ascribed. Where proof cannot be procured, we must be content with conjecture: classic or foreign lore can claim no share in the inspiration which comes from nature's free grace and liberality. From whatever source our poetry has sprung, it wears the character and bears the image of the north: the learned and the ignorant have felt alike its tenderness and humour, dignity and ardour; and both have united in claiming, as its brightest ornament, the poetry of Him of whose life and works I am now about to write. 'This, however, has already been done with so much affection by Currie, care by Walker, and manliness by Lockhart—the genius, the manners, and fortunes of Burns have been discussed so fully by critics of all classes, and writers of all ranks, that little remains for a new adventurer in the realms of biography, save to extract from the works of others a clear and judicious narrative. But, like the artist who founds a statue out of old materials, he has to re-produce them in a new shape, touch them with the light of other feeling, and inform them with fresh spirit and sentiment.

Robert Burns, eldest son of William Burness and Agnes Brown his wife, was born Jan. 25, 1759, in a clay-built cottage, raised by his father's own hands, on the banks of the Doon, in the district of Kyle, and county of Ayr. The season was ungentle and rough, the walls weak and new:—some days after his birth a wind arose which crushed the frail structure, and the unconscious Poet was carried unharmed to the shelter of a neighbouring house. He loved to allude, when he grew up, to this circumstance; and ironically to claim some commiseration for the stormy passions of one ushered into the world by a tempest. This rude edifice is now an ale-house, and belongs to the shoemakers of Ayr: the recess in the wall, where the bed stood in which he was born, is pointed out to inquiring

guests: the sagacious landlord remembers, too, as he brings in the ale, that he has seen and conversed with Burns, and ventures to relate traits of his person and manners. There is nothing very picturesque about the cottage or its surrounding grounds; the admirers of the Muses' haunts will see little to call romantic in low meadows, flat enclosures, and long lines of public road. Yet the district, now emphatically called "The land of Burns," has many attractions. There are fair streams, beautiful glens, rich pastures, picturesque patches of old natural wood; and, if we may trust proverbial rhyme, "Kyle for a man" is a boast of old standing. The birth of the illustrious Poet has caused the vaunt to be renewed in our own days.

The mother of Burns was a native of the county of Ayr; her birth was humble, and her personal attractions moderate; yet, in all other respects, she was a remarkable woman. She was blest with singular equanimity of temper; her religious feeling was deep and constant; she loved a well-regulated household; and it was frequently her pleasure to give wings to the weary hours of a chequered life by chanting old songs and ballads, of which she had a large store. In her looks she resembled her eldest son; her eyes were bright and intelligent; her perception of character, quick and keen. She lived till Jan. 14, 1820, rejoiced in the fame of the Poet, and partook of the fruits of his genius.

His father was from another district. He was the son of a farmer in Kincardine-shire, and born in the year 1721, on the lands of the noble family of Keith-Marischall. The retainer, like his chief, fell into misfortunes; his household was scattered, and William Burness, with a small knowledge of farming, and a large stock of speculative theology, was obliged to leave his native place, in search of better fortune, at the age of nineteen. He has been heard to relate with what bitter feelings he bade farewell to his younger brother, on the top of a lonely hill, and turned his face toward the border. His first resting-place was Edinburgh, where he obtained a slight knowledge of gardening: thence he

went into Ayr-shire, and procured employment first from Crawford of Doonside, and second, in the double capacity of steward and gardener, from Ferguson of Doonholm. Imagining now that he had established a resting-place, he took a wife, Dec. 1757, leased a small patch of land for a nursery, and raised that frail shealing, the catastrophe of which has already been related.

During his residence with the laird of Doonholm, a rumour was circulated that William Burness had fought for our old line of princes in the late rebellion, the fatal 1745. His austere and somewhat stately manners caused him to be looked upon as a man who had a secret in reserve, which he desired to conceal; and, as a report of that kind was not calculated for his good, he procured a contradiction from the hand of the clergyman of his native parish, acquitting him of all participation in the late "wicked rebellion." I mention this, inasmuch as the Poet, speaking of his forefathers, says, "they followed boldly where their leaders led," and hints that they suffered in the cause which crushed the fortunes of their chief. Gilbert Burns, a sensible man, but no poet, imagined he read in his brother's words an imputation on the family loyalty, and hastened to contradict it, long after his father had gone where the loyal or rebellious alike find peace. He considered his father's religious turn of mind, and the certificate of his parish minister, as decisive: and so they are, as far as regards William Burness; but the Keiths-Marischall were forfeited before he was born, and the Poet plainly alludes to earlier matters than the affair of the "Forty-five."—"My ancestors," he says, "rented lands of the noble Keiths-Marischall, and had the honour of sharing their fate. I mention this circumstance because it threw my father on the world at large." Here he means that the misfortunes of the fathers were felt by the children; he was accurate in all things else, and it is probable he related what his father told him. The feelings of the Poet were very early coloured with Jacobitism.

Though William Burness sought only at first to add the profits of a small stewardship to those of a little garden or nursery, and toiled along with his wife to secure food and clothing, his increasing family induced him to extend his views; and he accordingly ventured to lease Mount Oliphant, a neighbouring farm of a hundred acres, and entered upon it in 1765, when Robert was between six and seven years old. The elder Burns seems to have been but an indifferent judge of land: in a district where much fine ground is in cultivation, he sat down on a sterile and hungry spot, which no labour could render fruitful. He had commenced, too, on borrowed money; the seasons, as well as the soil, proved churlish; and Ferguson his friend dying, "a stern factor," says Robert, "whose

threatening letters set us all in tears," interposed; and he was compelled, after a six years' struggle, to relinquish the lease. This harshness was remembered in other days: the factor sat for that living portrait of insolence and wrong in the "Twa Dogs." How easily may endless infamy be purchased!

From this inhospitable spot William Burness removed his household to Lochlea, a larger and better farm, some ten miles off, in the parish of Tarbolton. Here he seemed at once to strike root and prosper. He was still strong in body, ardent in mind, and unsubdued in spirit. Every day, too, was bringing vigour to his sons, who, though mere boys, took more than their proper share of toil; while his wife superintended, with care and success, the whole system of in-door economy. But it seemed as if fortune had determined that nought he set his heart on should prosper. For four years, indeed, seasons were favourable, and markets good; but, in the fifth year, there ensued a change. It was in vain that he laboured with head and hand, and resolved to be economical and saving. In vain Robert held the plough with the dexterity of a man by day, and thrashed and prepared corn for seed or for sale, evening and morning, before the sun rose and after it set. "The gloom of hermits, and the unceasing moil of galley slaves," were endured to no purpose; and, to crown all, a difference arose between the tenant and his landlord, as to terms of lease and rotation of crop. The farmer, a stern man, self-willed as well as devoutly honest, admitted but of one interpretation to ambiguous words. The proprietor, accustomed to give law rather than receive it, explained them to his own advantage; and the declining years of this good man, and the early years of his eminent son, were embittered by disputes, in which sensitive natures suffer and worldly ones thrive.

Amid all these toils and trials, William Burness remembered the worth of religious instruction, and the usefulness of education in the rearing of his children. The former task he took upon himself, and in a little manual of devotion still extant, sought to soften the rigour of the Calvinistic creed into the gentler Arminian. He set, too, the example which he taught. He abstained from all profane swearing and vain discourse, and shunned all approach to levity of conversation or behaviour. A week-day in his house wore the sobriety of a Sunday; nor did he fail in performing family worship in a way which enabled his son to give the world that fine picture of domestic devotion, the "Cotter's Saturday Night." The depressing cares of the world, and a consciousness, perhaps, that he was fighting a losing battle, brought an almost habitual gloom to his brow. He had nothing to cheer him but a sense of having done his duty. The education of his sons he confided to other hands. At first he sent Robert

to a small school at Alloway Miln, within a mile of the place of his birth; but the master was removed to a better situation, and his place was supplied by John Murdoch, a candidate for the honours of the church, who undertook, at a moderate salary, to teach the boys of Lochlea, and the children of five other neighbouring farmers, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and Latin. He was a young man, a good scholar, and an enthusiastic instructor, with a moderate knowledge of human nature, and a competent share of pedantry. He made himself acceptable to the elder Burness by engaging in conversations on speculative theology, and in lending his learning to aid the other's sagacity and penetration; and he rendered himself welcome to Robert by bringing him knowledge of any kind—by giving him books—telling him about eminent men—and teaching him the art—which he was not slow in learning—of opening up fresh sources of information for himself.

Of the progress which Robert made in knowledge, his teacher has given us a very clear account. In reading, writing and arithmetic, he excelled all boys of his own age, and took rank above several who were his seniors. The New Testament, the Bible, the English Grammar, and Mason's collection of verse and prose, laid the foundation of devotion and knowledge. As soon as he was capable of understanding composition, Murdoch taught him to turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. By these means he perceived when his pupil knew the meaning of his author, and thus sought to instruct him in the proper arrangement of words, as well as variety of expression. For some two years and a half, Robert continued to receive the instructions of his excellent teacher under his father's roof. On Murdoch's nomination to the Grammar School of Ayr, his pupil did not forsake him, but took lodgings with him; and, during the ordinary school hours, walks in the evening, and other moments of leisure, he sought to master the grammar, in order to take upon himself the task of instructing his brothers and sisters at home. Under the same kind instructor he strove to obtain some knowledge of French. "When walking together, and even at meals," says Murdoch, "I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French, so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of our second week of study of the French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus*, in Fenelon's own words." All the French which the young Poet picked up, during one fortnight's

course of instruction, could not be much; the coming of harvest called him to more laborious duties; nor did he, save for a passing hour or so, ever seriously resume his studies in *Telemachus*.

Of these early and interesting days, during which the future man was seen, like fruit shaping amid the unfolded bloom, we have a picture drawn by the Poet's own hand, and touched off in his own vivid manner.—"At seven years of age I was by no means a favourite with any body. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot piety*—I say idiot piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and, by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in was the vision of *Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning,

"How are thy servants blest, O Lord!"

I particularly remember one half-stanza, which was music to my ear—

"For though on dreadful whirls we hung,
High on the broken wave."

I met with these in Mason's English collection, one of my school-books. The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two I have read since, were the *Life of Hannibal*, and the *History of the Acts and Deeds of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."

The education of Burns was not over when the school-doors were shut. The peasantry of Scotland turn their cottages into schools; and when a father takes his arm-chair by the evening fire, he seldom neglects to communicate to his children whatever knowledge he possesses himself. Nor is this knowledge very limited; it extends, generally, to the history of Europe, and to the literature of the island; but more particularly to the divinity, the poetry, and what may be called the traditional history of Scotland. An intelligent peasant is intimate with all those skirmishes, sieges, combats, and quarrels, domestic or national, of which public writers take no account. Genealogies of the chief families are quite familiar to him. He has by heart, too, whole volumes of songs and ballads; nay, long poems sometimes abide in

* Idiot, for idiotic. CURRIE.]

his recollection; nor will he think his knowledge much, unless he knows a little about the lives and actions of the men who have done most honour to Scotland. In addition to what he has on his memory, we may mention what he has on the shelf. A common husbandman is frequently master of a little library: history, divinity, and poetry, but most so the latter, compose his collection. Milton and Young are favourites; the flowery Meditations of Hervey, the religious romance of the Pilgrim's Progress, are seldom absent; while of Scottish books, Ramsay, Thomson, Fergusson, and now Burns, together with songs and ballad-books innumerable, are all huddled together, soiled with smoke, and frail and tattered by frequent use. The household of William Burness was an example of what I have described; and there is some truth in the assertion that in true knowledge the Poet was, at nineteen, a better scholar than nine-tenths of our young gentlemen when they leave school for the college.

Let us look into this a little more closely; nor can we see with a clearer light than what Burns himself has afforded us.—“What I knew of ancient story,” he observes, “was gathered from Salmon and Guthrie’s Geographical Grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature and criticism, I got from the Spectator. These, with Pope’s Works, some plays of Shakspeare, Tull, and Dickson on Agriculture, the Heathen Pantheon, Locke on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse’s History of the Bible, Justice’s British Gardener’s Dictionary, Boyle’s Lectures, Allan Ramsay’s Works, Taylor’s Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey’s Meditations, had formed the whole of my reading.” But when to these we add Young’s Night Thoughts, which his own poems prove him to have admired, we cannot see that we have advanced far on the way in which he walked, when he disciplined himself for the service of the Scottish muse. In truth, none of the works we have enumerated, save the poems of Allan Ramsay, could be of farther use to him than to fill his mind with information, and shew him what others had done. The “Address to the Deil,” “Highland Mary,” and “Tam o’ Shanter” are the fruit of far different studies.

Burns had, in truth, a secret school of study, in which he set up other models for imitation than Pope or Hervey.—“In my infant and boyish days,” he observes to Doctor Moore, “I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family (Jenny Wilson by name), remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs, concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraps, giants, enchanted

towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poesie; but had so strong an effect upon my imagination that to this hour in my nocturnal rambles I sometimes keep a look-out in suspicious places.” Here we have the Poet taking lessons in the classic lore of his native land and profiting largely; yet, to please a scholar like his correspondent, he calls his instructress an ignorant old woman, and her stories idle trumpery. Let the name of Jenny Wilson be revered by all lovers of the northern muse; her tales gave colour and character to many fine effusions. The supernatural in these legends was corrected and modified by the natural which his growing sense saw in human life and found in the songs of his native land.—“The collection of songs,” he says, “was my *vade-mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true tender or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.” He is rarely if ever wrong in his remarks on the songs of Scotland. They had, in no remote day, the advantages of the schooling which in these early hours he gave his fancy and understanding.

He had not yet completed these unconscious studies. In his farther progress his mother was his instructress. Her rectitude of heart, and the fine example of her husband, made an impression too strong to be ever effaced from the mind of her son. This was strengthened by the songs and ballads which she commonly chanted; they all wore a moral hue. The ballad which she loved most to sing, or her son to hear, is one called “The Life and Age of Man.” It is a work of imagination and piety, full of quaintness and nature; it compares the various periods of man’s life to the months of the year; and the parallel is both ingenious and poetic.—“I had an old grand-uncle,” says Burns, “with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years: the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of ‘The Life and Age of Man.’” The mother of the Poet, on being questioned respecting it by Cromek, some years before her death, repeated the ballad word for word, saying it was one of the many nursery songs of her mother, and that she first heard and learned it from her seventy years before. The noble poem of “Man was made to mourn,” bears a close resemblance to this old strain, both in language and sentiment. It taught Burns the art, which too few learn, of adding a moral aim to his verse; and though he rose in song to the highest pitch of moral pathos and sublimity, he took his first lesson from this now neglected ballad. In all his letters and memoranda, we

see him continually pointing to the rustic productions with which he was in youth familiar, and thus affording us in some measure the means of knowing how little of his excellence is reflected from others, and how much we owe to his own inspiration.

A student in art first studies the works of earlier masters; as he advances, living figures are placed before him, that he may see nature with his own eyes. Burns, who knew nothing of academic rules, pursued a similar course in poetry. He had become acquainted with limb and linament of the muse as she had been seen by others: he could learn no more from the dead, and now had recourse to the living: he had hitherto looked on in silence; it was now time to speak. Beauty first gave utterance to his crowding thoughts; with him love and poetry were coevals. "You know," he says, in his communication to Moore, "our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idiom, 'she was a bonnie sweet sonsie lass.' In short, she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell. You medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed, I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours—why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Eolian harp—and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly; and it was her favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a country laird's son, on one of his father's maids with whom he was in love: and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he—for, excepting that he could smear sheep and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself. Thus with me began love and poetry." This intercourse with the softer and gentler part of the creation—this feeling in the presence of youth and loveliness, and desire to give voice to his passion in song—were, to his slumbering emo-

tions, what the voice in scripture was among the "dry bones of the valley," calling them into life and action. It is true that his brother looked upon some of the ladies of these early verses as so many moving broomsticks on which fancy hung her garlands. They seemed otherwise to the Poet. He saw charms in them which prosaic spirits failed to see. We would take the word of the muse in such matters against a whole battalion of men,

"Who, darkling, grub this earthly holr
In low pursuit."

Having given, as he said, his "heart a heeze" among those soft companions, the Poet, like the picker of samphire on the beetling cliff, proceeded to seek farther knowledge in a perilous place—viz. among the young and the heedless—"the ram-stam squad, who zigzag on," without any settled aim or a wish ungratified. He offended his father, by giving his "manners a brush," at a country dancing-school. The good man had no sincere dislike, as some Calvinists have, to this accomplishment; still he tolerated rather than approved of it; he did not imagine that religion took to the barn-floor,—

"And reel'd, and set, and cross'd, and cleekit;"

cracking her thumbs and distorting, as Milton says, her "clergy climbs," to the sound of a fiddle; dancing, in short, he shook his head at, though he did not frown. The Poet felt, therefore, that in this he had approached at least to disobedience—a circumstance which he regrets in after-life, and regards as the first step from the paths of strictness and sobriety. "The will-o'-wisp meteors of thoughtless whim" began, he says, to be almost the sole lights of his way; yet early-ingrained piety preserved his innocence, though it could not keep him from folly. "The great misfortune of my life," he wisely observes, "was to want an aim. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune were the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance. Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity, as from a pride of observation and remark—a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriacism that made me fly solitude; add to these incentives to social life my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited; or any great wonder that always where two or three met together,

there was I among them. Another circumstance in my life, which made some alteration in my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school,* to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made pretty good progress. But I made greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry till the sun entered Virgo—a month which is always a carnival in my bosom—when a charming fillette, who lived next door to the school, upset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies.”

[The following additional particulars, respecting this period of his life, will be found interesting to every admirer of the Poet. They were collected by Mr. Robert Chambers, and appeared originally in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*:—

“If Burns be correct in stating that it was his nineteenth summer which he spent in Kirkoswald parish, the date of his residence there must be 1777. What seems to have suggested his going to Kirkoswald school was the connection of his mother with that parish. She was the daughter of Gilbert Brown, farmer of Craigenton, in this parochial division of Carrick, in which she had many friends still living, particularly a brother, Samuel Brown, who resided, in the miscellaneous capacity of farm-labourer, fisherman, and dealer in wool, at the farm-house of Ballochneil, above a mile from the village of Kirkoswald. This Brown, though not the farmer or guidman of the place, was a person held to be in creditable circumstances, in a district where the distinction between master and servant was, and still is, by no means great. His wife was the sister of Niven, the tenant; and he lived in the “Chamber” or better portion of the farm-house, but was now a widower. It was with Brown that Burns lived during his attendance at Kirkoswald school, walking every morning to the village where the little seminary of learning was situate, and returning at night.

The district into which the young poet of Kyle was thus thrown has many features of a remarkable kind. Though situated on the shore of the Firth of Clyde, where steamers are every hour to be seen on their passage be-

tween enlightened and busy cities, it is to this day the seat of simple and patriarchal usages. Its land, composed of bleak green uplands, partly cultivated and partly pastoral, was, at the time alluded to, occupied by a generation of primitive small farmers, many of whom, while preserving their native simplicity, had superadded to it some of the irregular habits, arising from a concern in the trade of introducing contraband goods on the Carrick coast.† Such dealings did not prevent superstition from flourishing amongst them in a degree of vigour of which no district of Scotland now presents any example. The parish has six miles of sea-coast; and the village, where the church and school are situate, is in a sheltered situation about a couple of miles inland.

The parish schoolmaster, Hugh Rodger, enjoyed great local fame as a teacher of mensuration and geometry, and was much employed as a practical land-surveyor. On the day when Burns entered the school, another youth, a little younger than himself, also entered. This was a native of the neighbouring town of Maybole, who, having there completed a course of classical study, was now sent by his father, a respectable shopkeeper, to acquire arithmetic and mensuration under the famed mathematician of Kirkoswald. It was then the custom, when pupils of their age first entered a school, to take the master to a tavern, and complete the engagement by treating him to some liquor. Burns and the Maybole youth, accordingly, united to regale Rodger with a potation of ale, at a public-house in the village, kept by two gentlemanly sort of persons named Kennedy—Jean and Anne Kennedy—the former of whom was destined to be afterwards married to immortal verse, under the appellation of *Kirkton Sean*, and whose house, in consideration of some pretensions to birth or style above the common, was always called “the Leddies’ House.” From that time, Burns and the Maybole youth became intimate friends, inasmuch that, during this summer, neither had any companion with whom he was more frequently in company than the one with the other. Burns was only at the village during school hours; but when his friend Willie returned to the paternal dome on Saturday nights, the poet would accompany him, and stay till it was time for both to come back to school on Monday morning. There was also an interval between the morning and afternoon meetings of the school, which the two youths used to spend together. Instead of amusing themselves with ball or any other sport, like the rest of the scholars, they would

* This was the school of Kirkoswald.

† “This business was first carried on here from the Isle of Man, and afterwards to a considerable extent from France, Ostend, and Gottenburg. Persons engaged in

it found it necessary to go abroad, and enter into business with foreign merchants; and, by dealing in tea, spirits, and silks, brought home to their families and friends the means of luxury and finery at the cheapest rate.”—*Statist. Account of Kirkoswald*, 1794.

take a walk by themselves in the outskirts of the village, and converse on subjects calculated to improve their minds. By and bye, they fell upon a plan of holding disputations, or arguments on speculative questions, one taking one side, and the other the other, without much regard to their respective opinions on the point, whatever it might be, the whole object being to sharpen their intellects. They asked several of their companions to come and take a side in these debates, but not one would do so; they only laughed at the young philosophers. The matter at length reached the ears of the master, who, however skilled in mathematics, possessed but a narrow understanding and little general knowledge. With all the bigotry of the old school, he conceived that this supererogatory employment of his pupils was a piece of absurdity, and he resolved to correct them in it. One day, therefore, when the school was fully met, and in the midst of its usual business, he went up to the desk, where Burns and Willie were sitting opposite to each other, and began to advert in sarcastic terms to what he had heard of them. They had become great debaters, he understood, and conceived themselves fit to settle affairs of importance, which wiser heads usually let alone. He hoped their disputations would not ultimately become quarrels, and that they would never think of coming from words to blows; and so forth. The jokes of schoolmasters always succeed amongst the boys, who are too glad to find the awful man in any thing like good humour to question either the moral aim or the point of his wit. They therefore, on this occasion, hailed the master's remarks with hearty peals of laughter. Nettled at this, Willie resolved he would "speak up" to Rodger; but first he asked Burns, in a whisper, if he would support him, which Burns promised to do. He then said that he was sorry to find that Robert and he had given offence;—it had not been intended. And indeed he had expected that the master would have been rather pleased, to know of their endeavours to improve their minds. He could assure him that such improvement was the sole object they had in view. Rodger sneered at the idea of their improving their minds by nonsensical discussions, and contemptuously asked what it was they disputed about? Willie replied that, generally, there was a new subject every day; that he could not recollect all that had come under their attention; but the question of to-day had been—"Whether is a great general or a respectable merchant the most valuable member of society?" The dominie laughed outrageously at what he called the silliness of such a question, seeing there could be no doubt for a moment about it. "Well," said Burns, "if you think so, I shall be glad if you take any side you please, and allow me to take the other, and let us discuss it before

the school." Rodger most unwisely assented, and commenced the argument by a flourish in favour of the general. Burns answered by a pointed advocacy of the pretensions of the merchant, and soon had an evident superiority over his preceptor. The latter replied, but without success. His hand was observed to shake; then his voice trembled; and he dissolved the school in a state of vexation pitiable to behold. In this anecdote, who can fail to read a prognostication of future eminence to the two disputants? The one became the most illustrious poet of his country; and it is not unworthy of being mentioned, in the same sentence, that the other advanced, through a career of successful industry in his native town, to the possession of a large estate in its neighbourhood, and some share of the honours usually reserved in this country for birth and aristocratic connection.

The coast, in the neighbourhood of Burns's residence at Ballochneil, presented a range of rustic characters upon whom his genius was destined to confer an extraordinary interest. At the farm of Shanter, on a slope overlooking the shore, not far from Turnberry Castle, lived Douglas Graham, a stout hearty specimen of the Carrick farmer, a little addicted to smuggling, but withal a worthy and upright member of society, and a kind-natured man. He had a wife named Helen M'Taggart, who was unusually addicted to superstitious beliefs and fears. The *steading* where this good couple lived is now no more, and the farm has been divided for the increase of two others in its neighbourhood; but genius has given them a perennial existence in the tale of Tam o' Shanter, where their characters are exactly delineated under the respective appellations of Tam and Kate. * * *

At Ballochneil, Burns engaged heartily in the sports of leaping, dancing, wrestling, *putting* (throwing) the stone, and others of the like kind. His innate thirst for distinction and superiority was manifested in these, as in more important, affairs; but though he was possessed of great strength, as well as skill, he could never match his young bed-fellow John Niven. Obligated at last to acknowledge himself beat by this person in bodily warfare, he had recourse for amends to a spiritual mode of contention, and would engage young Niven in an argument about some speculative question, when, of course, he invariably floored his antagonist. His satisfaction on these occasions is said to have been extreme. One day, as he was walking slowly along the street of the village, in a manner customary with him,—his eyes bent on the ground, he was met by the Misses Biggar, the daughters of the parish pastor. He would have passed without noticing them, if one of the young ladies had not called him by name. She then rallied

him on his inattention to the fair sex, in preferring to look towards the inanimate ground, instead of seizing the opportunity afforded him, of indulging in the most invaluable privilege of man, that of beholding and conversing with the ladies. "Madam," said he, "it is a natural and right thing for man to contemplate the ground, from whence he was taken, and for woman to look upon and observe man, from whom she was taken." This was a conceit, but it was the conceit of "no vulgar boy."

There is a great fair at Kirkoswald in the beginning of August—on the same day, we believe, with a like fair at Kirkoswald in Northumberland, both places having taken their rise from the piety of one person, Oswald, a Saxon king of the heptarchy, whose memory is probably honoured in these observances. During the week preceding this fair, in the year 1777, Burns made overtures to his Maybole friend, Willie, for their getting up a dance, on the evening of the approaching festival, in one of the public-houses of the village, and inviting their sweethearts to join in it. Willie knew little at that time of dances or sweethearts; but he liked Burns, and was no enemy to amusement. He therefore consented, and it was agreed that some other young men should be requested to join in the undertaking. The dance took place, as designed, the requisite music being supplied by a hired band; and about a dozen couples partook of the fun. When it was proposed to part, the reckoning was called, and found to amount to eighteen shillings and fourpence. It was then discovered that almost every one present had looked to his neighbours for the means of settling this claim. Burns, the originator of the scheme, was in the poetical condition of not being master of a single penny. The rest were in the like condition, all except one, whose resources amounted to a groat, and Maybole Willie, who possessed about half-a-crown. The last individual, who alone boasted any worldly wisdom or experience, took it upon him to extricate the company from its difficulties. By virtue of a candid and sensible narration to the landlord, he induced that individual to take what they had, and give credit for the remainder. The payment of the debt is not the worst part of the story. Seeing no chance from begging or borrowing, Willie resolved to gain it, if possible, by merchandise. Observing that stationery articles for the school were procured at Kirkoswald with difficulty, he supplied himself with a stock from his father's warehouse at Maybole, and for some weeks sold pens and paper to his companions, with so much advantage, at length, that he realised a sufficient amount of profit to liquidate the expense of the dance. Burns and he then went in triumph to the inn, and not only settled the claim to the last penny, but gave

the kind-hearted host a bowl of thanks into the bargain. Willie, however, took care from that time forth to engage in no schemes for country dances without looking carefully to the probable state of the pockets of his fellow adventurers.

Burns, according to his own account, concluded his residence at Kirkoswald in a blaze of passion for a fair *fillette* who lived next door to the school. At this time, owing to the destruction of the proper school of Kirkoswald, a chamber at the end of the old church, the business of parochial instruction was conducted in an apartment on the ground floor of a house in the main street of the village, opposite the church-yard. From behind this house, as from behind each of its neighbours in the same row, a small stripe of kail-yard (*Anglice*, a kitchen-garden) runs back about fifty yards, along a rapidly ascending slope. When Burns went into the particular patch behind the school to take the sun's altitude, he had only to look over a low enclosure to see the similar patch connected with the next house. Here, it seems, Peggy Thomson, the daughter of the rustic occupant of that house, was walking at the time, though more probably engaged in the business of cutting a cabbage for the family dinner, than imitating the flower-gathering Proserpine, or her prototype Eve. Hence the bewildering passion of the poet. Peggy afterwards became Mrs. Neilson, and lived to a good age in the town of Ayr, where her children still reside.

At his departure from Kirkoswald, he engaged his Maybole friend and some other lads to keep up a correspondence with him. His object in doing so, as we may gather from his own narrative, was to improve himself in composition. "I carried this whim so far," says he, "that, though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger." To Willie, in particular, he wrote often, and in the most friendly and confidential terms. When that individual was commencing business in his native town, the poet addressed him a poetical epistle of appropriate advice, headed with the well-known lines from Blair's Grave, beginning

"Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul—
Sweetener of life and solder of society."

This correspondence continued till the period of the publication of the poems, when Burns wrote to request his friend's good offices in increasing his list of subscribers. The young man was then possessed of little influence; but what little he had, he exercised with all the zeal of friendship, and with no little success. A considerable number of copies were accordingly transmitted in proper time to

his care, and soon after, the poet came to Maybole to receive the money. His friend collected a few choice spirits to meet him at the King's Arms Inn, and they spent a happy night together. Burns was on this occasion particularly elated, for Willie, in the midst of their conviviality, handed over to him above seven pounds, being the first considerable sum of money the poor bard had ever possessed. In the pride of his heart, next morning, he determined that he should not walk home, and accordingly he hired from his host a certain poor hack mare, well known along the whole road from Glasgow to Portpatrick—in all probability the first hired conveyance that Poet Burns had ever enjoyed, for even his subsequent journey to Edinburgh, auspicious as were the prospects under which it was undertaken, was performed on foot. Willie and a few other youths who had been in his company on the preceding night, walked out of town before him, for the purpose of taking leave at a particular spot; and before he came up, they had prepared a few mock-heroic verses in which to express their farewell. When Burns rode up, accordingly, they saluted him in this formal manner, a little to his surprise. He thanked them, however, and instantly added, "What need of all this fine parade of verse? It would have been quite enough if you had said—

Here comes Burns,
On Rosinante;
She's d — poor,
But he's d — canty."

The company then allowed Burns to go on his way rejoicing.¹⁷*

Nature, in all this, resumes Mr. Cunningham, was pursuing her own plan in the education of Burns. The melancholy of which he complains was a portion of his genius; the invisible object to which he was impelled was poetry. No one can fail to perceive, in the scenes which he describes as dear to his heart and fancy, the very materials over which his muse afterwards breathed life and inspiration; and no one can fail to feel, that all this time he had been walking in the path of the muse without knowing it.

He complains that he was unfitted with an aim. He looked around, and saw no outlet for his ambition. Farming he failed to find the

same as it is in Virgil—elegance united with toil. The high places of the land were occupied, and no one could hope to ascend save the titled or the wealthy. The church he could not reach without an expensive education, or patronage less attainable still. Law held out temptation to talent, but not to talent without money; while the army opened its glittering files to him who could purchase a commission, or had, in the words of the divine,

"A beauteous sister, or convenient wife,"

to smoothe the way to preferment. With a consciousness of genius, and a desire of distinction, he stood motionless, like a stranded vessel whose sails are still set, her colours flying, and the mariners a-board. He had now and then a sort of vague intimation from his own heart that he was a poet; but the polished and stately versification of English poetry alarmed and dismayed him: he had sung to himself a song or two, and stood with his hand on the plough, and his heart with the muse. The strength which he could not himself discover was not likely to be found out by others. It is thus we find him spoken of by his good old kind preceptor:—"Gilbert," says Murdoch, "always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit, than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church music. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untuneable. It was long before I could get him to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said—

"Mirth, with thee I mean to live;"

and certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind." The simple school-master had perhaps paid court to some small heritor's daughter, and dressed his face in smiles for the task; he accordingly thought that the Muse was to be wooed and won in the same Malvolio way, and never imagined that the face inspired with contemplation and melancholy could be dear to her heart.

While the boy was thus rising into the man,

* "All this pleasantries was not without its bitter. The poet's Maybole friend, on inspecting the volume, was mortified to find the poetical epistle which had been addressed to him, printed with the name *Andrew* substituted for his own, and the motto from Blair, as was but proper, omitted. He said nothing at the time; but, young, ambitious, and conscious of having done all in his humble power for friendship's cause, he could not forgive so marked a slight. He therefore from that time ceased to answer Burns's letters. When the poet was next at Maybole, he asked the cause, and Willie answered by inquiring if he could not himself divine it. He said he thought he could, and adverted to the changed name in the poem. Mr.

Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, had been, he said, a useful friend and patron to him. He had a son commencing a commercial life in Liverpool. I thought, he said, that a few verses addressed to this youth would gratify his father, and be accepted as a mark of my gratitude. But, my muse being lazy, I could not well make them out. After all, this old epistle occurred to me, and by putting his name into it, in place of yours, I made it answer this purpose. Willie told him in reply that he had just exchanged his friendship for that of Mr. Aiken, and requested that their respective letters might be burnt—a duty which he scrupulously performed on his own part. The two disputants of Kirkoswald never saw or corresponded with each other again." 7

and the mind was expanding with the body, both were in danger of being crushed, as the daisy was, in the Poet's own immortal strains, beneath the weight of the furrow. The whole life of his father was a continued contest with fortune. Burns saw, as he grew up, to what those days of labour and nights of anxiety would lead, and set himself, with heart and hand, to lighten the one, and alleviate the other. At the plough, scythe, and reaping hook, he feared no competitor, and so set all fears of want in his own person at defiance: he felt but for his father. All this is touchingly described by Gilbert. "My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and, at fifteen, was the principal labourer on the farm; for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt, at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old—for he was now above fifty, broken down with the long-continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances—these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evening with a dull head-ache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time." The elder Burness, while in the Lothians, had paid attention to gardening; but he could not bring much agricultural knowledge from his native county. His toil was incessant; but it was of the body, not of the brain. More is required in farming than mere animal vigour and dexterity of hand. A skilful farmer may be called a learned man;—to work according to the season, and in the spirit of the soil; to anticipate sunshine, and be prepared for storms; to calculate chances and consequences; suit demands at home, and fit markets abroad; require what not many fully possess.

I know not how much of this knowledge William Burness possessed. He was, however, fertile in expedients: when he found that his farm was unproductive in corn, he thought the soil suitable for flax, and resolved himself to raise the commodity, while to the Poet he allotted the task of manufacturing it for the market. To accomplish this, it was necessary that he should be instructed in flax-dressing: accordingly, at Midsummer, 1781, Robert went to Irvine, where he wrought under the eye of one Peacock, kinsman to his mother. His mode of life was frugal enough. "He possessed," says Currie, "a single room for his lodging, rented, perhaps, at the rate of a shilling a week. He passed his days in constant labour as a flax-dresser, and his food consisted chiefly of oatmeal sent to him from

his father's family." A picture of his situation and feelings is luckily preserved of his own drawing: the simplicity of the expression, and pure English of the style, are not its highest qualities. He thus wrote to his father:—"Honoured Sir:—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on new year's day: but work comes so hard upon us that I do not choose to be absent on that account. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and, on the whole, I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity: for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity: but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable, employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it: and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

"As for this world," he continues, "I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is yet too late." This letter is dated Dec. 27, 1781. No one can mistake the cause of his melancholy: obscure toil and an undistinguished lot on earth directed his thoughts in despair to another world, where the righteous "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." To plough, and sow, and reap were poetic labours, compared with the dusty toil of a flax-dresser: with the lark for his companion, and the green fields around him, his spirits rose, and he looked on himself as forming a part of creation: but when he sat down to the brake and the heckle, his spirits sank, and his dreams of ambition vanished.

Flax-dressing, in the poet's estimation, seemed any thing but the way to wealth and fame: the desponding tone of his letter was no

good augury; the catastrophe of the business is not quite in keeping with quotations from Scripture and hopes in heaven. "Partly through whim," said the bard to Moore, "and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in Irvine, to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair: as we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire and burnt to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth a sixpence." This disaster was followed by one much more grievous. "The clouds of misfortune," says Burns, "were gathering fast round my father's head. After three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, he was just saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in and carried him away to 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' His all went among the hell-hounds that prowl in the kennel of justice. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was, my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—'Depart from me, ye accursed!'" The intelligence, rectitude, and piety of William Burness were an honour to the class to which he belonged: his eminent son acknowledged, when his own intercourse with the world entitled his opinions to respect, that he had met with few who understood men, their manners, and their ways, equal to his father: "but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility," he added, "are disqualifying circumstances in the paths of fortune." "I remember William Burness well," said the venerable Mrs. Hunter, daughter to Ferguson of Doonholm; "there was something very gentlemanly in his manners and appearance: unfortunately for him my father died early, the estate passed into other hands, and was managed by a factor, who, it is said, had no liking for the family of Mount Oliphant."

Robert and his brother were afflicted, but did not despair; they collected together the little property which law and misfortune had spared,* and, in the year 1784, took the farm of Mossiel, near Mauchline, consisting of 118 acres, at an annual rent of ninety pounds. Their mother superintended the dairy and the household, while the Poet and Gilbert undertook for the rest. "It was," observes the latter, "a joint concern among us: every member of the family was allowed wages for the labour per-

formed; my brother's allowance and mine was seven pounds per annum, and his expenses never in any year exceeded his slender income. His temperance and frugality were every thing that could be wished." It is pleasing to contemplate a picture such as this.

We are now about to enter into the regions of romance. "I began," says Burns, "to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes." The course of his life, hitherto, has shewn that his true vocation was neither the plough nor the heckle. He acquired, indeed, the common knowledge of a husbandman; but that was all he knew, or cared to know, of the matter. "Farmer Attention," says the proverb, "is a good farmer all the world over:" and Burns was attentive as far as ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, stacking, thrashing, winnowing, and selling, went; he did all this by a sort of mechanical impulse; but success in farming demands more. The farmer should know what is doing in his way in the world around; he must learn to anticipate demand, and, in short, to time every thing. But he who pens an ode on his sheep, when he should be driving them forth to pasture—who stops his plough in the half-drawn furrow, to rhyme about the flowers which he buries—who sees visions on his way from market, and makes rhymes on them—who writes an ode on the horse he is about to yoke, and a ballad on the girl who shews the whitest hands and brightest eyes among his reapers—has no chance of ever growing opulent, or of purchasing the field on which he toils. The bard amidst his ripening corn, or walking through his fields of grass and clover, beholds on all sides images of pathos or of beauty, connects them with moral influences, and lifts himself to heaven: a grosser mortal sees only so many acres of promising corn or fattening grass, connects them with rising markets and increasing gain, and, instead of rising, descends into "Mammon's filthy delve." That poetic feelings and fancies such as these passed frequently over the mind of Burns in his early days, we have his own assurance; while labour held his body, poetry seized his spirit, and, unconsciously to himself, asserted her right and triumphed in her victory.

Some obey the call of learning, and become poets; others fall, they know not how, into the company of the muse, and break out into numbers. Love was the voice which called up the poet in Burns; his Parnassus was the stubble-field, and his inspirer that fair-haired girl from whose hands he picked the thistle-stings, and delighted to walk with when but some fifteen

* [Both Robert and Gilbert speak of the total ruin of their father at the time of his death. "His all," says Robert, "went among the hell-hounds that prowl in the kennel of justice." In order to reconcile this statement with one immediately ensuing, by Gilbert, "that Mossiel was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family," it is necessary to add that, at the bankruptcy of William

Burness, his children had, respectively, considerable claims upon his estate, on account of their services to him in the farm, which claims were preferable to those of the other creditors. They thus, with the perfect approbation of the law, and, we may add, of justice also, rescued a portion of his property from the "hell-hounds" alluded to.

years old. The song which he made in her praise he noted down in a little book entitled "Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, by Robert Burness; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it." "I composed the song," he said, long afterwards, "in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and I never recollect it but my heart melts and my blood sallies." The passion which he felt failed to find its way into the verse; there is some nature, but no inspiration:—

"My Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
And what is best of a'—
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.
She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
Gars ony dress look weel."

These lines give little indication of future strength; his vigour of thought increased with his stature; before he was a year older, the language of his muse was more manly and bold:—

"I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing
Gaily in the sunny beam,
List'ning to the wild birds singing
By a falling crystal stream;
Straight the sky grew black and daring,
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave,
Trees, with aged arms are warring
O'er the swelling drumlie wave."

Few of the early verses of Burns are preserved; some he himself destroyed, others were composed, but not perhaps committed to paper; while it is likely that not a few are entirely lost. In his nineteenth summer, the leisure season of the farmer, while studying mensuration at a school on the sea-coast, he met with the Peggy of one of his earliest songs. "Stepping into the garden," he says, "one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel—

"Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower."

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless." On his return home, the harvest was commenced. To the fair lass of Kirkoswald, he dedicated the first fruits of his fancy, in a strain of equal freedom and respect, beginning—

"Now wastlin' winds and slaught'ring guns
Bring Autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs on whirling wings
Among the blooming heather;

Now waving grain wide o'er the plain
Delights the weary farmer,
And the moon shines bright when I rove at night
To muse upon my charmer."

In a still richer strain he celebrates his nocturnal adventures with another of the fair ones of the west. Burns could now write as readily as he could speak, and pour the passion which kindled up his veins into his compositions. It is thus he sings of Annie—

"I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear,
I hae been merry drinkin';
I hae been joyfu' gatherin' gear,
I hae been happy thinkin'.
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
Among the rigs o' barley."

He who could write such lines as these had little to learn from the muse; and yet he soon surpassed them in liquid ease of expression, and happy originality of sentiment. It is one of the delusions of his biographers that the sources of his inspiration are to be sought in English poetry; but, save an image from Young, and a word or so from Shakspeare, there is no trace of them in all his compositions. Burns read the English poets, no doubt, with wonder and delight: but he felt he was not of their school; the language of life with him was wholly different; the English language is, to a Scottish peasant, much the same as a foreign tongue; it was not without reason that Murray, the oriental scholar, declared that the English of Milton was less easy to learn than the Latin of Virgil. Any one, conversant with our northern lyrics, will know what school of verse Burns imitated when he sang of Nannie, a lass who dwelt nigh the banks of the Lugar:

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
'Mang moors and mosses many, O;
The wintry sun the day has closed
And I'll awa' to Nannie, O.
"Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O;
The opening gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O."

Such was the language in which the Poet addressed the rustic damsels of Kyle. Ladies are not very apt to be won by verse, let it be ever so elegant; they set down the person who adorns them with the lilies and the roses of imagination as a dreamer, and look around for more substantial comfort. Waller's praise made Sacharissa smile—and smile only; and another lady of equal beauty saw in Lord Byron a pale-faced lad, lame of a foot—and married a man who could leap a five-barred gate; yet Burns was, or imagined himself, beloved; he wrote from his own immediate emotions; his muse was no visionary dweller by an imaginary fountain, but a substantial

"Fresh young landart lass,"

whose charms had touched his fancy. Nor was he one of those who look high, and muse on dames nursed in velvet laps, and fed with golden spoons. "He had always," says Gilbert, "a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself; his love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure, to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator, as she appeared to others, and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her." His own words partly confirm the account of Gilbert. "My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and, as every other warfare in this world, my fortune was various, sometimes I was received with favour, and sometimes mortified with repulse." That his love was sometimes repulsed we have the assurance of a poem, now lost, in which, like Cowley, he had recorded his labours in the way of affection; when doors were closed against him, or the Annie or Nannie of the hour failed in their promises, he added another verse to the ballad, the o'erword of which was "So I'll to my Latin again." If he sought consolation in studying the Latin rudiments, when jilted, his disappointments in that way could not be many, for his knowledge of the language was small. In his twenty-fourth year, his skill in verse enabled him to add the crowning glory to his lyric compositions; who the lady was that inspired it we are not told, but she must have been more than commonly beautiful, or more than usually kind: as the concluding compliment might have been too much for one, he has wisely bestowed it on the whole sex. The praise of other poets fades away before it.

"There 's nought but care on every han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O!
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O!

"Auld nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O!
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O!"

One of those heroines was servant in the household of General Stewart, of Stair and Afton; Burns, during a visit with David Sillar, left, it is said, one of his songs, which was soon chanted in bower and hall, and attracted the notice of Mrs. Stewart, a lady both beautiful and accomplished, who sent for the Poet on his next visit, and by her remarks and praise confirmed his inclination for lyric verse. He afterwards alluded to these interviews in a conversation with Anna Stewart, of Afton, and said

he should never forget with what trepidation of heart he entered the parlour and approached her mother: this early notice was also present to his mind in copying some of his later pieces of poetry: he addresses them—the original is now before me—to "Mrs. General Stewart, of Afton, one of his first and kindest patronesses." The progress which Burns made in the more serious kind of verse, during this lyrical fit, was not at all so brilliant; his attempts have more of the language of poetry, than of its simple force and true dignity. There are passages, indeed, of great truth and vigour, but no continued strain either to rival his after flights, or compare with the unity and finished excellence of "My Nannie, O," and "Green grow the Rashies." He had prepared himself, however, for those more prolonged efforts; nature had endowed him with fine sensibility of heart and grandeur of soul; he had made himself familiar with nature, animate and inanimate; with the gentleness of spring, the beauty of summer, the magnificence of autumn, and the stormy sublimity of winter; nor was he less so with rural man and his passions and pursuits. Though indulging in no sustained flights, he had now and then sudden bursts in which his feelings over-mastered all restraint. The following stanza, written in his twenty-fourth year, shows he had read Young, and felt the resemblance which the season of winter bore to his own clouded fortunes:—

"The aweeping blast, the sky o'ercastr,
The joyless winter day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May;
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine."

"There is scarcely any earthly object," says Burns, "gives me more—I do not know that I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or a high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.'" In another mood he wrote what he called "a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification, but full of the sentiment of my heart." This ditty wants harmony and vivid force of expression: but it breathes of the old ballad:—

"My father was a farmer,
Upon the Carrick border,
And carefully he bred me up
In decency and order:

He bade me act a manly part,
Though I had ne'er a farthing,
For without an honest manly heart
No man was worth regarding."

In one of his desponding fits, when he "looked back on prospects drear," or beheld the future darkening, he wrote that Prayer, in which some have seen nothing but sentiments of contrition and submissiveness, and others a desire to lay on the Creator the blame of the follies with which he charges himself. I have heard his enemies quote the following verse with an air of triumph:—

"Thou knowest that Thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong,
And, listening to their witching voice,
Has often led me wrong."

Poetry had now become with Burns a darling pursuit: he had no settled plan of study, for he composed at the plough, at the harrow, and with the reaping-hook in his hand, and usually had half-a-dozen or more poems in progress, taking them up as the momentary tone of his mind suited the sentiment of the verse, and laying them down as he grew careless or became fatigued. None of the verses of those days are in existence, save the "Death of Poor Mailie," a performance remarkable for genuine simplicity of expression; and "John Barleycorn," a clever imitation of the old ballads of that name, a favourite subject with the minstrels of Caledonia. His mode of composition was singular: when he hit off a happy verse, in a random fit of inspiration, he sought for a subject suitable to its tone of language and feeling, and then completed the poem. This shows a mind full of the elements of poetry. "My passions," he said, "when once lighted up, raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme, and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet."

When Burns succeeded in evoking the demon of passion by the spell of verse, he had leisure, or at least peace, for a time; but he could not be idle: he turned his attention to prose. His boyish feelings had been touched, he tells us, on reading the Vision of Mirza, and many passages in the Bible; he had read too, with attention, a collection of letters, by the wits of Queen Anne's reign. This improved his taste; and as he grew up, and correspondence was forced upon him by business or by friendship, he was pleased to see that he could express himself with fluency and ease. He thought so well of those performances that he made copies of them, and, in moments of leisure or vanity, sought, and found, satisfaction in comparing them with the compositions of his companions. He observed, he said, his own superiority. Nay, he says, he carried the whim so far that, though he had not three farthings' worth of

business in the world, yet almost every post brought him as many letters, as if he had been a plodding son of the day-book and ledger. He now extended his reading to the Spectator, the Man of Feeling, Tristram Shandy, Count Fathom, and Pamela: he studied as well as read them, and endeavoured to form a prose style, uniting strength and purity. There are passages of genuine ease and unaffected simplicity in his early, as well as his later, letters; yet there is too much of a premeditated air, and a too obvious desire of showing what fine, bold, vigorous things he could say. No one, however, can peruse his prose of those days without wonder; it shows a natural vigour of mind, and a talent for observation: there are out-flashings, too, of a fiery impetuosity of spirit worthy of a genius cultivated as well as lofty, and passages of great elegance and feeling.

In his common-place book, his rhymes are accompanied with explanations in prose, and, as he commenced these insertions in April 1783, he has afforded us the means of measuring the extent of his acquirements in early life. He seemed not unconscious that he could say something worth the world's attention.—"As he was but little indebted," he said, "to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinged with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but it may be some entertainment, to a curious observer of human nature, to see how a ploughman thinks and feels under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike on all the species."

In these compositions we may continually trace thoughts and images, which growing taste and increasing vigour enabled him, afterwards, to beautify and expand. The following passage suggested the fine stanza on happy love in the "Cotter's Saturday Night":—"Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and wickedness it leads a young inexperienced mind into, still I think it, in a great measure, deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen, in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection."

In the same strain he traces, elsewhere, the connexion between love, music, and poetry, and points out, as a fine touch in nature, that passage in a modern love composition—

"As toward her cot he jogged along,
Her name was frequent in his song."

"For my own part," he observes, "I never had the least thought, or inclination, of turning

poet till I once got heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart." No one has accounted more happily for the passionate eloquence of his songs than he has done himself.

That he extended his views, and desired, after having sung of the maidens of Carrick and Kyle, to celebrate their streams and hills, and statesmen and heroes, we have evidence enough in other parts of his works.—"I am hurt," he says in his Memoranda, "to see the other towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c., of Scotland immortalized in song, while my dear native country, the ancient balleries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous, both in ancient and modern times, for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants—a country where civil, and particularly religious, liberty, have ever found their first support and their last asylum—a country, the birth-place of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in history, particularly a great many of the actions of the glorious Wallace—yet we have never had one Scottish poet of any eminence to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes of Ayr, and the heathy, mountainous source and winding sweep of the Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, and Tweed. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy; but alas! I am far unequal to the task both in genius and education." No one ever remedied an evil of this kind with such decision and effect. The Ayr, the Doon, the Irvine, and the Lugar are now flowing in light, nor have their heroes and their patriots been forgotten.

In another passage, in his common-place book, he acquaints us with the models his muse set up for imitation:—"There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which shew them to be the work of a masterly hand, and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names—O, how mortifying to a bard's vanity!—are now 'buried among the wreck of things which were.' O, ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly, and describe so well—the last, the meanest of the muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and, with trembling wing, would sometimes soar after you; a poor rustic lard unknown pays this sympathetic pang to your memory. Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world, unfortunate in love: *he*, too, has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all,

the loss of the woman he loved. Like you, all his consolation was his muse; she taught him in rustic measures to complain: happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones, and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which the world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesie and love!" Much of the man and the poet is visible in this remarkable passage; it prepares us for his approaching sunburst of poetry, which lightened more than Carrick and Kyle.

Those who imagine Burns to have been only a rhyming, raving youth, who sauntered on the banks of streams, in lonely glens, and by castles grey, musing on the moon, and woman, and other inconstant things, do him injustice; a letter in 1783 to his cousin, James Burness, writer in Montrose, shews something of the world around him.—"This country, till of late, was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of silk, lawn, and carpet-weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the shoe way, but now entirely ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our landholders, full of ideas of farming, gathered from England, and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds in the quality of land, and consequently stretch us much beyond what in the event we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods, in our improvements of farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed on new ones. In short, my dear Sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its still more unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast." Here the poet is sunk, and the observing farmer rises: in the same letter he touches on a theme which had its influence on his own character and habits—at least he imagined so.

"There is a great trade of smuggling carried on along our coasts, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it, but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance; but fortune, as is usual with her when she is uncommonly lavish of her favours, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them, if she would leave them no worse than when she found them." At the period to which this refers, many farmers on the sea-coast were engaged in the contraband trade: their horses and servants

were frequently employed in disposing, before the dawn, of importations, made during the cloud of night; and though Burns, perhaps, took no part in the traffic, he associated with those who carried it on, and seemed to think that insight into new ways of life, and human character, more than recompensed him for the risk he ran. It is dangerous for a bare hand to pluck a lily from among nettles; men of few virtues and many follies are unsafe companions.

"I have often observed," he says, "in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him, though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be with strict justice called wicked. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us examine, impartially, how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity; and how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation. I say, any man who can thus think will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him with a brother's eye. I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind, commonly known by the ordinary phrase of blackguards, sometimes further than was consistent with the safety of my character. Those who, by thoughtless prodigality or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin, though disgraced by follies, I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty." All this is true; but men of evil deeds are not, till they have purified themselves, fit companions for the young and the inflammable. There is no human being so depraved as to be without something which connects him with the sympathies of life. Dirk Hatteraick, before he hung himself, made out a balanced account to his owners, shewing that, though he had cut throats and drowned bantlings as a smuggler, he could reckon with the house of Middleburg for every stiver. It is more pleasing to perceive, in the Poet's early prose, sentiments similar to those which he afterwards more poetically expressed in his "Address to the Rigidly Righteous."

"Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin' wrang,
To step aside is human.
One point must still be greatly dark,
The reason *why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far, perhaps, they rue it."

The people of Kyle were slow in appreciating this philosophy. When they saw him

hand-and-glove with roving smugglers, or sitting with loose comrades, who scorned the decencies of life, or looking seriously at a horde of gypsies huddled together in a kiln, or musing among "randie, gangrel bodies" in Poosie Nancie's, they could not know that, like a painter, he was studying character, and making sketches for future pictures of life and manners: they saw nothing but danger to himself from such society. And here lies the secret of the complaint he has recorded against the world, in his twenty-fourth year.—"I don't well know what is the reason of it, but, somehow or other, though I am pretty generally beloved, yet I never could find the art of commanding respect. I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in, what Sterne calls, the understrapping virtue of discretion." No doubt of it. The sober and sedate saw that he respected not himself; they loved him for his maunliness of character, and eloquence, and independence; but they grieved for a weakness out of which they could not see that strength and moral beauty would come.

The glory of his poetry was purchased at a price too dear for himself. "In Irvine," says Gilbert, "he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue, which had hitherto restrained him."—"The principal thing which gave my mind a turn," says Burns to Dr. Moore, "was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless child of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic; but a great man, taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying, just as he was ready to launch out into the world, he went to sea in despair. His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and, of course, strove to imitate him; in some measure I succeeded. I had pride before; but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief." Richard Brown, to whom this refers, survived the storms which threatened shipwreck to his youth, and lived and died respected. When spoken to on the subject, he exclaimed, "Illicit love! levity of a sailor! The Poet had nothing to learn that way when I saw him first."

That Burns talked and thought too freely and indiscreetly, in his early years, we have evidence in verse. In his memorandum-book

there are entries which, amid all their spirit and graphic beauty, contain levities of expression which may be tolerated when the wine is flowing and the table in a roar, but which look not so becoming on the sober page which reflection has sanctioned. In May, 1785, he wrote the lively chant called "Robin," in which he gives an account of his birth:

"There was a lad was born in Kyle,
But what'n a day o' what'n a style
I doubt its hardly worth our while
To be sae nice wi' Robin.

"The gossip keekit in his loof,
Quo' she, wha lives will see the proof,
This waly boy will be nae coof—
I think we'll ca' him Robin.

"But sure as three times three mak nine,
I see, by lika score and line,
This chap will dearly like our kin',
So leeze me on thee, Robin."

In these lines he approaches the border-land between modesty and impropriety—we must quote no farther, nor seek to shew the Poet in still merrier moods. Burns, in all respects, arose from the people: he worked his way out of the darkness, drudgery, and vulgarities of rustic life, and, in spite of poverty, pain, and disappointment, emerged into the light of heaven. He was surrounded by coarse and boisterous companions, who were fit for admiring the ruder sallies of his wit, but incapable of understanding those touches of moral pathos and exquisite sensibility with which his sharpest things are accompanied. They perceived but the thorns of the rose—they felt not its fine odour. The spirit of poesie led him, in much peril, through the prosaic wilderness around, and prepared him for asserting his right to one of the highest places in the land of song.

As the elder Burness was now dead, the Poet had to exercise his own judgment in the affairs of Mossgiel: at first all seemed to prosper—"I had entered," he says, "upon this farm with a full resolution—'Come, go to, I will be wise;' I read farming books; I calculated crops; I attended markets; and, in short, in spite of the devil, the world and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from the late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, 'like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'"—"The farm of Mossgiel," says Gilbert, "lies very high, and mostly on a cold, wet bottom. The first four years that we were on the farm were very frosty, and the spring was very late. Our crops, in consequence, were very unprofitable, and, notwithstanding our utmost diligence and economy, we found ourselves obliged to give up our bargain, with the loss of a considerable portion of our original stock." The judgment could not

be great which selected a farm that lay high, on a cold, wet bottom, and purchased bad seed-corn. That Burns put his hand to the plough and laboured incessantly there can be no doubt—but an unsettled head gives the hands much to do: when he put pen to paper, all thoughts of crops and cattle vanished; he only noted down ends of verse and fragments of song: his copy of Small's Treatise on Ploughs is now before me; not one remark appears on the margins; but on the title-page is written "Robert Burns, Poet." He had now decided on his vocation.

This study of song, love of reading, wanderings in woods, nocturnal excursions in matters of love, and choice of companions, who had seen much and had much to tell, was, unconsciously to himself, forcing Burns upon the regions of poesie. To these may be added the establishment of a club, in which subjects of a moral or domestic nature were discussed. The Tarbolton club consisted of some half-dozen young lads, sons of farmers; the Poet who planned it was the ruling star; the place of meeting was a small public-house in the village; the sum expended by each was not to exceed three-pence, and, with the humble cheer which this could bring, they were, when the debate was concluded, to toast their lasses and the continuance of friendship. Here he found a vent for his own notions, and as the club met regularly and continued for years, he disciplined himself into something of a debater and acquired a readiness and fluency of language; he was never at a loss for thoughts.

Burns drew up the regulations.—"As the great end of human society," says the exordium, "is to become wiser and better, this ought, therefore, to be the principal view of every man in every station of life. But, as experience has taught us that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued, are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind, it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind, by some employment or another, that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but, at the same time, not so serious as to exhaust them. But, superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity of earning the sustenance of human life, by the labour of their bodies, whereby not only the faculties of the mind, but the sinews and nerves of the body, are so fatigued that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion, to relieve the wearied man, worn down with the necessary labours of life." The first meeting was held on Halloween, in the year 1780. Burns was president, and the question of debate was, "Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome

in person, nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable, in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune: which of them shall he choose?" Other questions of a similar tendency were discussed, and many matters regarding domestic duties and social obligations were considered. This rustic institution united the means of instruction with happiness; but, on the removal of the poet from Lochlea, it lost the spirit which gave it life, and, dissensions arising, the club was scattered, and the records, much of them in Burns' hand-writing, destroyed.

No sooner was the Poet settled at Mossgiel, than he was requested to aid in forming a similar club in Mauchline. The regulations of the Tarbolton institution suggested those of the other; but the fines for non-attendance, instead of being spent in drink, were laid out in the purchase of books; the first work thus obtained was the *Mirror*, the second the *Lounger*, and the time was not distant when the founder's genius was to supply them with a work not destined soon to die. This society subscribed for the first edition of the poems of its celebrated associate. The members were originally country lads, chiefly sons of husbandmen—a description of persons, in the opinion of Burns, more agreeable in their manners, and more desirous of improvement, than the smart, self-conceited mechanics of towns, who were ready to wrangle and dispute on all topics, and whose vanity would never allow that they were confuted.

One of the biographers of Burns has raised what the Poet calls "a philosophic reek," on the propriety of refining the minds of hinds and farmers, by means of works of elegance and delicacy: without believing, with Currie, that if not a positive evil, it is a doubtful blessing, we may question whether more than a dozen, out of ten thousand hinds and mechanics, would feel inconvenience from increased delicacy of taste. On a vast number such lessons would be utterly lost, for no polish can convert a common pebble into a diamond; while, from the minds of many, it would remove the weeds with the same discriminating hand that the Poet cleared his riggs of corn, and "spared the symbol dear," the Scottish thistle. In truth, the danger which Currie dreaded has been encountered and overcome; more than all the works he enumerated, as forming the reading of Burns, are to be found in the hands of the peasantry of Scotland. Milton, Thomson, Young, poets of the highest order and of polished elegance, are as well known to the peasantry as the Bible is: yet no one has complained that a furrow more or less has been drawn in consequence, that our shepherds swear their sheep with too delicate a finger,

and that our rustics are oppressed by a fastidious nicety of taste.

It would have been better for the Poet if he had maintained that purity in himself, which, in the regulations of his clubs, he desired to see in others. The consequences of keeping company with the free and the joyous, were now to be manifested. Soon after his father's death, one of his mother's maids, in person not at all attractive, produced his

"Sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,"

and furnished him with the opportunity of standing, as a sinner, on the stool of repentance, and commemorating the event in rhymes, licentious as well as humorous. He had already sung of his own birth in a free and witty way, and he now put a song into the mouth of the partner of his folly, in which she cries, with rather more of levity than sorrow—

"Wha will own he did the fau't,
Wha will buy the groanin'-maut,
Wha will tell me how to ca't?
The rantin' dog, the daddie o't."

"When I mount the creepie chair,
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I'll ask nae mair,
The rantin' dog, the daddie o't."

Nor can any one applaud the taste of "Rob the Rhymer's Address to his Illegitimate Child;" he glories in a fault which, he imagines, perplexed the church; for, he sought not to conceal from himself, that both the minister and elders were all but afraid of meddling with a delinquent, who could make the country merry at their expense. In a third poem, he gives a ludicrous account of his appearance before the session, and of the admonition he received. Instead of promising amendment, he draws consolation from Scripture with equal audacity and wit:—

"King David, o' poetic brief,
Wrought 'mang the lasses such mischief,
As fill'd his after life with grief,
An' bluidy rants,
An' yet he's rank'd among the chief
O' lang-syne saunts.
"And maybe, Tam, for a' my cants,
My wicked rhymes, an' drucken rants,
I'll gi'e auld cloven Clottie's haunts
An unco slip yet,
An' snugly sit among the saunts
At Davie's hip yet."

It is painful to touch, even with a gentle hand, on the moral sores of so fine a genius, but his character cannot be understood otherwise: almost any other erring youth would have resigned himself, without resistance, to the discipline of the kirk, and bowed to its rebuke: Burns was not to be so tamed—stricken, he struck again, and, instead of courting silence and seclusion, sung a new song, and walked out into the open sunshine of remark and ob-

servation. I cannot set this regardlessness down to growing hardness within, nor to petrified feeling: it arose from a want of taste in seeking distinction. "The mair they talk, I'm kenn'd the better," he had already adopted as a motto; he knew that folly such as his was not uncommon, and he hoped, for one person who censured, there would be two who thought him a clever fellow, with wit at will—a little of a sinner, but a great deal of a poet.

This desire of distinction was strong in Burns. In those days he would not let a five pound note pass through his hands, without bearing away a witty endorsement in rhyme: a drinking-glass always afforded space for a verse: the blank leaf of a book was a favourite place for a stanza; and the windows of inns, and even dwelling-houses, which he frequented, exhibit to this day lively sallies from his hand. Yet, perhaps, a love of fame was not stronger in him than in others. In his time magazines were few, and newspapers not numerous; into the daily, weekly, or monthly papers, aspirants in verse can now pour their effusions: but Burns had no such facilities when he started, and was obliged to take the nearest way to notice. He began, likewise, to talk of his exploits over the pint-stoup: he gave to himself, in one of his rhymes, the name of "drunken ranter," and, with ordinary powers, and but a moderate inclination, desired to be numbered with five-bottle debauchees, who saw three horns on the moon, and had

"A voice like the sea, and a drouth like a whale."

He went farther: he asserted, with Meston, good rhyme to be the product of good drink, and sung—

"I've seen me daizet upon a time
I scarce could wink, or see a prime,
Just ae half-mutehkin does me prime,
Ought less is little;
Then back I rattle on the rhyme
As gieg's a whittle."

This vaunted insobriety in verse must not be taken literally. We have seen Burns passionately in love in rhyme—we know that he was not less so with his living goddess of the hour; but it was otherwise with him in the matter of strong drink. He was no practised toper, but thought it necessary to look a gay fellow in poetry. Inspiration, in both ancient and modern times, has been imputed to wine, and Burns wished to be thought inspired. Wine was out of his reach; his muse found her themes among humble and familiar things, and it was his boast that the Ferintosh could work intellectual wonders as well as the Falernian. For others, he wished Parnassus a vineyard; but for himself, he preferred the banks of the Ayr or the Lugar, to those of Helicon, and the juice of barley to that of the grape.

When he had neither money to spend on liquor, nor health to relish it, he was chanting songs in honour of tippling; putting himself down in the list of topers, and recording that whiskey was the northern ambrosia, too good for all, save gods or Scotsmen. This is not unlike the madness of Johnson from poverty, at College. In the case of Burns, there was something national as well as personal: whiskey and ale are the offspring of the Scottish vales, and he preferred them to "dearfu' wine or foreign gill." Liquor was not then, and I believe never was, a settled desire of soul with the Poet.

When Burns supposed that his "drunken rants" and nocturnal excursions among the lasses of Kyle had made him

"———Slander's common speech,
A text for infamy to preach,"

he found, to his surprise, that in another way he had won the approbation of certain ministers of the kirk of Scotland. How this came about may be briefly described. Calvinism, at that time, was agitated with a schism among its professors, and the factions were known in the west by the names of Old Light and New Light. The Old Light enthusiasts aspired to be ranked with the purest of the Covenanters; they patronized austerity of manners and humility of dress, and stigmatized much that the world loved, as things vain and unessential to salvation. The New Light countenanced no such self-denial; men were permitted to gallop on Sunday, to make merry and enjoy themselves; and women were indulged in the article of dress, and failings or follies were treated with mercy at least, if not indulgence. The former refused to lean on the slender reed of human works, thought a good deed savoured of selfishness, and that faith, and faith alone, was the light which led to heaven: the latter thought a cheerful heart was an acceptable thing with God; that good works helped to make a good end, and that faith, and faith alone, was not religion, but a false light, which led to perdition. Like the writers in the late singular controversy on Art and Nature in Poetry, the divines of the west of Scotland perhaps never concluded that faith and works were both essential to salvation, and that, in truth, Christianity required them. Each side thundered from the pulpit; their sermons partook of the character of curses, and their conversation in private life had the hue of controversy. Their parishioners, too, raised up their voices—for, in Scotland, the meanest peasant can be eloquent and puzzling on speculative theology—and the whole land rung with mystical discussions on effectual calling, free grace, and predestination, when Burns precipitated himself into the midst of the conflict.

The Poet sided with the New Light faction. For this several reasons may be assigned—he was not educated closely in the tenets of Cal-

vinism; and his own good taste and sense taught him that faith without works was folly. His experience in church discipline, in the case of "Sonsie Bess," had not tended to increase his reverence for the Old Light professors, among whom "Daddie Auld," his parish pastor, was a leader. Moreover, Gavin Hamilton, of whom he held his land, was not only a New-Lightite, but a friend of the Poet, and a martyr in the cause of free-agency. We may add to all this, that the Poet naturally fell into the ranks of those who allowed greater liberty of speech, and a wider longitude of morals. Perhaps the chiefs of the Old Light Association would have regarded little an attack in prose, as to such missiles they were accustomed; but their new enemy assaulted them with a weapon against which the armour of dulness was no defence. He attacked and vanquished them with witty verse, much to the joy of the children of the New Light, and greatly to the amusement of the country.

Of the effect of these satiric attacks, the Poet himself gives an account to Moore:—"The first of my poetic offspring which saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit: but, to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause. 'Holy Willie's Prayer' next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery—if haply any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers." This is almost all that the Poet says of his satiric labours in aid of the New Light. The poem to which he first alludes is called "The Holy Tuiizie," and relates the bickering and battling which arose between Moodie, minister of Riccarton, and Russel, minister of Kilmarnock—both children of the Old Light. The poetic merit of the piece is small; the personalities marked and strong. "The Ordination" succeeded, and is in a better vein. There is uncommon freedom of language and happiness of expression in almost every verse. The crowning satire of the whole is "Holy Willie's Prayer," a daring work, personal, poetical, and profane. The hero of the piece was a west country pretender to superlative godliness; one of the Old Light faction; an elder of the kirk—a man with many failings, who made himself busy in searching for faults in the flock. Burns first signalized him in an epitaph, in which he consigns him to reprobation, and then warns the devil that to lay his "nine-tailed cat" on such a contemptible delinquent would be little to his own

credit. Then he makes Willie honestly confess his own backslidings, and explain predestination in a way that causes us to shudder as well as to smile:—

"O Thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,
Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for onie guid or ill
They've done afore thee!"

He next bethinks him of his own glory and errors; the latter, it is quite plain, he considers but as spots in the sun—specks in the cup of the cowslip. He claims praise in the singular, and acknowledges folly in the plural:—

"And sometimes, too, wi' worldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But Thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd in sin."

Nor can Burns be said to have overlooked his own interest; he compliments Hamilton of Mossiel as one—

"Who has so many taking arts,
Wi' great and sma',
Frae God's sin priests the people's hearts,
He steals awa'."

In a similar strain of poetry and wit, he, in another poem of the same period, congratulates Goudie of Kilmarnock on his work respecting revealed religion. The reasoning and the learning of the essayist are slumbering with all forgotten things; but the verses they called into life are not fated soon to die:—

"O Goudie! terror of the Whigs,
Dread of black coats and reverend wigs,
Sour Bigotry, on her last legs,
Gimring looks back,
Wishing the ten Egyptian plagues
Wad seize you quick."

In after-life the poet seemed little inclined to remember the verses he composed on this ridiculous controversy; and I have heard that he was unwilling to talk about the subject. Perhaps he felt that he had launched the burning darts of verse against men of blameless lives, and honesty, and learning; that his muse had wasted some of her time on a barren and profitless topic, and had sung less from her own heart than for the gratification of others. Of all these poems, he admitted but the "Ordination" into his works, willing, it would seem, to let the rest die with the controversy which occasioned them. The New Light professors seemed to care little what sort of weapon they employed: the verse of Burns has two edges, like a Highland sword, and Presbyterianism suffered as well as the Old Light. It is almost incredible that venerable clergymen applauded those profane sallies, learned them by heart, carried copies in their pockets, and quoted and re-

cited them till they grew popular, and were on every lip. Even "Holy Willie's Prayer" was countenanced by the New Light pastors. Among the Poet's papers was found an epistle to the Rev. John Mac Math, enclosing a copy of the Prayer which he had requested; the date of this communication, Sept. 17, 1785, fixes the season of this western dispute. It seems, however, to approach the close; the Poet is grown weary of his work, as well he might:—

"My musie, tir'd with mony a sonnet,
On gown, and band, and dounce black bonnet,
Is grown right eerie now she's done it,
Lest they should blame her,
An' rouse their holy thunder on it,
And anathem her."

Burns, during this drudgery, was strengthening his hands for higher and purer duties. In labouring to accommodate his thoughts, and

"Riving the words to gar them clink,"

in unison with the technicalities of mystical controversy, he was acquiring an almost audacious vigour of expression, and a ready skill in handling subjects either of fact or of fancy. It is true that he learned to speak profanely, but then this was in the service of the kirk; he learned something more when he dined with drunken lawyers, and grew tipsy among godly priests. The muse of Kyle helped to extinguish the Old Light, but she left predestination where she found it. A Mauchline mason said to the Poet, when he read him "Holy Willie's Prayer," "It's a' very weel and very witty, and I have laughed that shouldna have laughed; but ye'll no hinder me from thinking that Providence kenn'd weel what he was doing when he made man—foresaw the upshot—wha was to be good and wha was to be bad; and knowing this, and making man a fallible creature still, looks as like predestination as ought I ever heard of."

These satiric rhymes established the fame of Burns in his native place; his company was now courted by country lairds, village lawyers, and parish school-masters, and by all persons who had education above common, or kept some state in their households. He was always welcome to Gavin Hamilton and his family; equally so to Robert Aiken, a worthy writer in Ayr; and now he became so to all who had any relish for wit, or any soul for poetry. He was at once the companion of the grave and of the giddy; now dining with the minister and a dounce friend or two at the manse; then presiding in a Mason-meeting, chanting songs, and pushing about the punch with the "brethren of the mystic level," or communing on the severity of the excise laws with a "blackguard smuggler," or some Highland envoy from the dominions of Ferintosh, whose "cousin did as good as keep a small still." When he appeared in company

he was expected to say something clever or shrewd; he was pointed out at church and at market, and peasant spoke of him to peasant as a wild, witty lad, who lived at Moss-giel, and had all the humour of Ramsay, and more than the spirit of Fergusson.

It is humiliating to think that works which Burns seemed willing to forget brought him first into notice. Some of the most exquisite lyrics ever said or sung failed to do for him what "The Holy Tuilzie" and "The Ordination" accomplished at once; and there can be no question that "Holy Willie's Prayer" and the "Epistle to Goudie" prepared the minds of the people around him for admiring his "Halloween" and his "Cotter's Saturday Night." In truth, poetry, which only embodies sentiments and feelings common to our nature, cannot compete, in the race of immediate fame, with verse appealing to our passions and our prejudices, and glowing with the heat of a passing dispute. Time settles and explains all. The true Florimel is found to be of delicate flesh and blood, breathing of loveliness and attraction, and adorned by nature; while the false Duessa, is discovered to be a thing of shreds and patches, with jewels of glass, and an artificial complexion. Nature and truth finally triumph, and to nature and truth Burns accordingly returned. He left the agitated puddles of mysticism to drink at the pure springs with the muse of love, and joy, and patriotism.

Of the person and manners of the Poet, at this important period of his life, we have various accounts; but the portraits, although differing in posture as well as in light and shade, all express the same sentiment! He was now grown up to man's estate, and had taken his station as such in society: he was the head, too, of his father's house, and though his expenses were regulated upon a system of close economy, his bargains, as a farmer, controlled by his brother Gilbert, and his demeanour at the fire-side under the mild influence of his mother, he had in all other matters his own will. He has recorded much of himself at this period both in verse and prose, nor can this be set down to egotism: from all the world, save the little community of Kyle, he was completely shut out, and he turned his eyes on himself, and wrote down his own hopes and aspirations. He has even recorded his stature in rhyme:—

"O! why the deuce should I repine,
Or be an ill foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine,
I'll go and be a sodger."

His large dark expressive eyes; his swarthy visage; his broad brow, shaded with black waving hair; his melancholy look, and his well-knit frame, vigorous and active—all united to draw men's eyes upon him. He affected, too, a certain oddity of dress and manner. He

was clever in controversy; but obstinate, and even fierce, when contradicted, as most men are who have built up their opinions for themselves. He used with much taste the common pithy saws and happy sayings of his country, and invigorated his eloquence by apt quotations from old songs or ballads. He courted controversy, and it was to this period that Murdoch, the accomplished mechanic, referred, when he told me that he once heard Burns haranguing his fellow-peasants on religion at the door of a change-house, and so unacceptable were his remarks that some old men hissed him away. Nor must it be supposed that, even when listened to, he was always victorious.—“Burns, sir,” said one of his old opponents, “was a ‘cute chield and a witty ane, but he didna half like to have my harrow coming owre his new-fangled notions.”

The early companions of the Poet were men above the common mark. Smith, to whom he addressed some of his finest poetic epistles, was a person of taste and sagacity; David Sillar, a good scholar, and something of a poet; Ranken, an out-spoken, ready-witted man, and a little of a scoffer; Lapraik lived at a distance; he had written at least one song worthy of notice. Hamilton was open-hearted and open-handed, and of a good family; Aiken seems to have abounded in good sense and good feeling; Balfour was much of a gentleman; Parker, kind and generous; Mackenzie, of Irvine, a skilful surgeon and a good scholar, who introduced the Poet to Dugald Stewart, Whiteford, Erskine, and Blair;—but his chief comrade and confidant was his brother Gilbert, who at an early age distinguished himself for sense and discernment.

“Gilbert,” says Mackenzie, “partook more of the manner and appearance of the father, and Robert of the mother. In the first interview I had with him at Lochlea, he was frank, modest, well-informed, and communicative. The Poet seemed distant, suspicious, and without any wish to interest or please. He kept himself very silent in a dark corner of the room, and, before he took any part in conversation, I frequently observed him scrutinizing me, while I conversed with his father and his brother. From the period of which I speak, I took a lively interest in Robert Burns. Even then his conversation was rich in well-chosen figures, animated and energetic. Indeed, I have always thought that no person could have a just idea of the extent of Burns’ talents who had not heard him converse. His discrimination of character was greatly beyond that of any person I ever knew, and I have often observed to him that it seemed to be intuitive. I seldom ever knew him make a false estimate of character when he formed the opinion from his own observation.”

The sketch drawn by Sillar is of another kind:—“Robert Burns was some time in the parish of Tarbolton, prior to my acquaintance

with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning with which he and all poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied with suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe, he had a great deal to say for himself, but that they suspected his principles. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church his plaid, which was of a particular colour (I think fillemot), he wrapped in a peculiar manner round his shoulders. These surmises, and his exterior, made me solicitous of his acquaintance. I was introduced by Gilbert not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where, in a short time, I became a frequent, and, I believe, not unwelcome, visitant. After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard, we frequently met upon Sundays at church; when, between sermons, instead of going with our friends or our lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks, I have often been struck with his facility in addressing the fair sex: many times when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them, with the greatest ease and freedom; and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance. Some of the few opportunities of a noon-tide walk that a country life allows her laborious sons, he spent on the banks of the river, or in the woods, in the neighbourhood of Stair. Some book or other he always carried, and read, when not otherwise employed; it was likewise his custom to read at table.”

A third hand completes the sketch:—“Though Burns,” says Professor Walker, “was still unknown as a Poet, he already numbered several clergymen among his acquaintance: one of these communicated to me a circumstance which conveyed, more forcibly than many words, an idea of the impression made upon his mind by the powers of the Poet. This gentleman had repeatedly met Burns in company, when the acuteness and originality displayed by the latter, the depth of his discernment, the force of his expressions, and the authoritative energy of his understanding, had created in the former a sense of his power, of the extent of which he was unconscious till revealed to him by accident. The second time that he appeared in the pulpit, he came with an assured and tranquil mind; and though a few persons of education were present, he advanced some length in the service with his confidence and self-possession unimpaired. But when he observed Burns, who was of a different parish, unexpectedly enter the church, he was instantly affected with a tremour and embarrassment, which apprized him of the impression his mind, unknown to itself, had previously received.”

Authorities such as these confute the inconsiderate assertions of Heron, respecting the "opening character" of the Poet. We have no proof that he became discontented in early life with the humble labours to which he saw himself confined, and with the poor subsistence he was able to earn by them—that he could not help looking upon the rich and great whom he saw around, with an emotion between envy and contempt, as if something had still whispered to his heart that there was injustice in the external inequality between his fate and theirs. The early injuries of fortune oppressed him at times; but, till he was thirty years old, his spirit was buoyant and unbroken, and he looked with an unclouded brow on the world around him.

In "The Holy Fair," the Poet, accidentally or purposely, rose out of the lower regions of personal invective into the purer air of true poetry, and gave us a picture of singular breadth and beauty. The aim of the poem is chiefly to reprehend, by means of wit and humour, those almost indecent festivities which, in many western parishes, accompany the administration of the sacrament. Instead of preaching to the staid and the pious under the roof of the kirk, the scene is transferred to the open church-yard, where a tent or pulpit is erected for the preachers; while, all around, the people of the parish seat themselves on graves or grave-stones, decorously to look and listen. In the earlier days of the church, when men were more in earnest, there is no doubt that a scene such as this in the open air was attended with nothing of an objectionable nature; nay, at present, the thoughtful and the serious contemplate it as something edifying and impressive; but with the pious and the orderly come swarms of the idle and the profligate; beves of lads and lasses keep moving about, in search of better seats or finer points of view, and tiring, or affecting to tire, of the sermon, which is sometimes of the longest, retire to a neighbouring change-house, or to the open door of an ale-booth, where, as they empty the glass, they may hear the voice of the preacher. There is no doubt that these "Holy Fairs," as they were scoffingly called, afforded scenes more than justifying serious as well as sarcastic reproof. In the poem, Burns here and there shews he had been reading other poets. His allegorical personages are partly copied from Fergusson, and the hares that hipped down the furs did the same for Montgomery. "The farcical scene the Poet there describes," says Gilbert, "was often a favourite field for his observation, and most of the incidents he mentions had actually passed before his eyes."

Burns now openly took upon himself the name of Poet; he not only wrote it in his books, but wrought it into his rhymes, and began to entertain hopes of distinction in the realms of song. But nothing, perhaps, marks

the character of the man more than the alteration which he made in his own name. He had little relish for by-gone things; there are few gazings back at periods of honour or of woes in all his strains. The name he had hitherto borne was of old standing, the Poet sat in judgment upon it, concluded that it had a barbarous sound, and threw away Burness—a name two syllables long, and adopted that of Burns in its stead. Had his father been alive, this might not have happened. On the 20th of March, 1786, he says to one of his Correspondents:—"I hope some time before we hear the goulk, to have the pleasure of seeing you at Kilmarnock, when I intend having a gill between us in a mutchkin stoup, which will be a great comfort and consolation to, dear Sir, your humble servant, Robert Burness."—This is the latest time that I find his original name in his own hand-writing; it is plain, that up to this period, he imagined he had achieved nothing under that of his father deserving to live. On the 20th of April he wrote his name "Burns" in a letter enclosing to his friend Kennedy that beautiful poem the "Mountain Daisy," headed "The Gowan." This was with the Poet a season of changes.

Burns commenced emblazoning his altered name with all that is bright and lasting in verse. From the day that he entered upon Mossiel with the resolution of becoming rich, till the dark hour on which he quitted it, reduced well nigh to beggary, he continued to pour forth poem after poem, and song succeeding song, with a variety and rapidity truly wonderful. His best poems are the offspring of those four unfortunate years, and the history of each has something in it of the curious or the romantic. "The Death and dying words of poor Mailie," and, better still, "Poor Mailie's Elegy," suggested to him probably by "The Ewie wi' the crooked horn" of Skinner, were written before the death of his father—at least the former was. The Poet had, it seems, bought a ewe with two lambs from a neighbour, and tethered her in a field at Lochlea. "He and I," says Gilbert, "were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us, at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch."

The "Elegy" has much of the Poet's latter freedom and force. He had caressed this four-footed favourite till she followed at his heels like a dog:—

"Through a' the town she trotted by him,
A lang half-mile she could deary him,
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed;
A friend mair faithfu' n'er come nigh him,
Than Mailie dead."

One of the rejected verses ought to be remem-

bered in Kyle, were it but for the honour done to the lambs of Fairlee :—

"She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo' like goats, an' legs like trams,
She was the flower o' Fairlee lambs,
A famous breed;
Now Robin, greetin' chews the hams
O' Mailie dead."

The image in the two last lines is out of harmony with the sentiment of the poem; and Burns, whose taste was born with him, omitted the verse in consequence.

The "Epistle to David Sillar" was written some time in the summer of 1784. Burns was in the habit of composing verse at the plough or the harrow :—he turned it over in his mind for several days, and when he had polished it to his satisfaction, or found a moment's leisure, he committed it to paper. Gilbert relates that he was weeding with Robert in the kail-yard, when he repeated the principal part of the Epistle. The first idea of his becoming an author was then started. "I was much pleased," says his brother, "with the Epistle, and said to him that I was of opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste: that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scottish poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression; but here there was a train of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet; that, besides, there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging. Robert seemed pleased with my criticism, and we talked of sending it to some magazine."

If we credit the accuracy of the verse, and the memory of Gilbert, the Poet was, in 1784, acquainted with Jean Armour, and had become her admirer and lover. But it is more likely that the verse in which her name occurs was added afterwards, unless we believe that he had made an inroad among the "Mauchline belles," almost as soon as he went to Moss-giel. His Epistles are of high merit. They are, perhaps, the finest compositions of the kind in the language—airy, elegant, and philosophic—with more nature than Prior's Epistle to "Fletwood Shepherd," and equal power of illustration. He had already begun to take those serious looks at human life of which his poems are full; nor did he fail to perceive how unequally the gifts of fortune, as well as those of genius, are divided.

"It's hardly in a body's power,
To keep at times from being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;

How best o' chieils are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And kenna how to wair't."

He lived long enough to think more deeply and more darkly on this topic. At present the world was brightening before him—the mist seemed rolling away from his path, and he felt disposed to enjoy life without murmuring.

The epistolary form was a favourite way with Burns of giving air to his opinions and feelings; when he had doubts of fame—was o'rmastered with his passions—or disgusted with

"The tricks of knaves and fash of fools,"

he lifted the pen and indited an epistle to a friend, and poured out the loves, the cares, the sorrows, the joys, the hopes, and fears of the passing moment. It is truly wonderful with what ease and felicity—nay, with what elegance, he twines the garlands of his fancy round a barren topic. Much of his history may be sought for in these compositions. In his "Epistle to James Smith," he alludes to his Poems: intimates that he had thoughts of printing them, pretends to take alarm at the sight of moths revelling on the pages of authors :—

"Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters."

and philosophically exclaims, as well as poetically—

"Then farewell hopes o' laurel-boughs
To garland my poetic brows:
Henceforth I'll rove where busy plough
Are whistling thrang,
An' teach the lonely heights an' howes
My rustic sang."

Burns takes a loftier view of the matter in his epistle to Lapraik, written on the first of April, 1785. He intimates that he is no poet, in the high acceptation of the word; but a rhymist, who deals in homely words, and has no pretence to learning. He pulls himself down, but he refuses to let any one else up; he prefers a spark of nature's fire to all the artificial heat of education, and speaks contemptuously of "critic folk," and learned judges :—

"What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shoals,
Or knappin'-hammers."

"A set o' dull, conceited hashes,
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak:
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!"

In a second epistle to the same person, Burns claims for "the ragged followers of the Nine" a life of immortal light, and presents to their contemplation the sordid sons of Mammon suffering under the transmigration of souls :—

"Though here they scrape, and squeeze, and growl,
 Their worthless neivefu' of a soul
 May in some future carcase howl,
 The forest's fright;
 Or in some day-detesting owl
 May shun the light."

In a poetic letter to another of his companions, while exulting in the idea of making the rivers and rivulets of Kyle flow bright in future song, he lets us into the secret of his own mode of musing:—

"The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
 Till by himsel' he learned to wander
 Adown some trotting burn's meander,
 An' no think lang!
 O! sweet to stray, an' pensive ponder
 A heartfelt sang!"

Of these poems, we are informed that the first epistle to John Lapraik was written in consequence of a clever song, which that indifferent rhymist had made, under the inspiration of adversity. The epistle to Ranken carries its own explanation with it: we may allow it to remain half concealed in the thin mist of allegory. The epistle to Smith is perhaps the very best of all these compositions: the singular ease of the verse; the moral dignity of one passage; the wit and humour of a second; the elegance of compliment in a third; and the life which animates the whole, must be felt by the most ordinary mind. One of the verses was frequent on the lips of Byron during the darkening down of his own day:

"When auld life's day draws near the gloamin',
 Then fareweel vacant, careless roamin',
 An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',
 An' social noise;
 An' fareweel, dear, deluding woman!
 The joy of joys!"

In the winter of 1785, Burns composed his "Address to the Deil." His sable majesty is familiar to the imagination of every Scottish peasant, and there are few wild glens in which he has not been heard or seen. The Satan of Milton was a favourite with the Poet; he admired his fortitude in enduring what could not be remedied, and pitied a noble and exalted mind in ruins. This feeling he united to the traditions of shepherds and husbandmen, and treated the Evil Spirit with much of the respect due to fallen royalty. "It was, I think," says Gilbert, "in the winter, as we were going together with carts for coal to the family fire—and I could yet point out the particular spot—that the author first repeated to me the 'Address to the Deil.'" That Burns was now acquainted with Jean Armour, the variations of this poem sufficiently prove:—

"Lang syne, in Eden's happy scene,
 When strappin' Adam's days were green,
 And Eve was like my bonny Jean,
 My dearest part,
 A dancin', sweet, young, handsome quean,
 Wi' guileless heart."

The evil spirit of religious controversy was now fairly out of him: he makes no allusions, though the temptation was great, to the clergy, but treats the subject with natural truth and vigour. All northern natures sympathize in the following fine stanza:—

"I've heard my reverend grannie say,
 In lanely glens ye like to stray;
 Or where auld ruin'd castles gray,
 Nod to the moon,
 Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way
 Wi' eldritch croon."

There is something of serious jocularity in the verse which expresses the Poet's fears and hopes of futurity:—

"An' now, auld Cloots, I ken y're thinkin',
 A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
 Some luckless hour will send him linkin'
 To your black pit;
 But, faith! he'll turn a corner, jinkin',
 An' cheat you yet."

In the contemplated repentance of Satan, Burns seems to hint at universal redemption—a finishing touch of fine and unexpected tenderness.

The "Halloween" is a happy mixture of the dramatic and the descriptive, and bears the impress of the manners, customs, and superstitions of the people. We see the scene, and are made familiar with the actors; we not only see them busied in the mysteries of the night, but we hear their remarks; nor can we refrain from accompanying them on their solitary and perilous errands to "winnow wechts of naething, sow hemp-seed, pull kale-stocks, eat apples at the glass;" or, more romantic still, "wet the left sleeve of the shirt where three lairds' lands meet at a burn." The whole poem hovers between the serious and the ludicrous: in delineating the superstitious beliefs and mysterious acts of the evening, Burns keeps his own opinion to himself. The scene is laid in the last night of harvest, as the name implies, at a husbandman's fire-side, whose corn is gathered into the stack-yard and the barn; and the hands which aided in the labour are met—

"To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,
 An' haud their Halloween."

They seem not unaware that while they are merry, or looking into futurity, fairies are dancing on Cassilis-Downans, and witches are mounted on their "rag-weed nags," hurrying to some wild rendezvous, or concerting, with the author of mischief, fresh woes for man. It is the most equal of all the Poet's compositions.

A singular poem, and in its nature personal, was also the offspring of the same year. This is "Death and Doctor Hornbook." The hero of the piece was John Wilson, school-master of the parish of Tarbolton: a person of blameless life, fond of argument, opinionative, and

obstinate. At a mason-meeting, it seems, he provoked the Poet by questioning some of his positions, in a speech stuffed with Latin phrases, and allusions to pharmacy. The future satire dawned on Burns at the moment, for he exclaimed twice, "Sit down, Doctor Hornbook!" On his way home he seated himself on the parapet of a bridge near "Willie's Mill," and, in the moon-light, began to reflect on what had passed. It then occurred to him that Wilson had added to the moderate income of his school, the profit arising from the sale of a few common medicines; this suggested an interview with "Death," and all the ironical commendations of the Dominie, which followed. He composed the poem on his perilous seat, and, when he had done, fell asleep; he was awakened by the rising sun, and, on going home, committed it to paper. It exhibits a singular union of fancy and humour; the attention is arrested at once by the ludicrous difficulty felt, in counting the horns of the moon, and we expect something to happen when his shadowy majesty comes upon the stage, relates his experience in "nicking the thread and choking the breath," and laments how his scythe and dart are rendered useless by the skill of Dr. Hornbook. On the appearance of the poem, Wilson found the laugh of Kyle too much for him—

"The wouns haud out their fingers laughin'."

So he removed to Glasgow, where he engaged with success in other pursuits. He lives, but loves no one the better, it is averred, for naming the name of the Poet, or making any allusion to the poem. Burns repeated the satire to his brother, during the afternoon of the day on which it was composed. "I was holding the plough," said Gilbert, "and Robert was letting water off the field beside me."

The patriotic feelings of the bard were touched when he took up the song of "Scotch Drink," against the government of the day, and uttered his "Earnest cry and prayer to the Scottish representatives in the House of Commons." Yet bitter as he sometimes is, and overflowing with humorous satire, these poems abound with natural and noble images; nay, he scolds himself into a pleasant mood, and scatters praise on the "chosen Five-and-Forty," with much skill and discrimination. His praise of whiskey is strangely mingled with sadness:—

"Food fills the wame, an' keeps us livin';
Though life's a gift no worth receivin';
When heavy drugg'd wi' pine an' grievin',
But, oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down hill, seriov'in',
Wi' rattlin' glee.

"Thou clears the head o' doited Lear,
Thou cheers the heart o' droopin' Care,
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,
At 'a weary toil;
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile."

A country forge with a blazing fire, an anxious blacksmith, and a welding heat, will rise to the fancy readily on reading these inimitable stanzas:—

"When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
O rare! to see thee fize and freath
I' the luggit caup!
Then Burnewin comes on like death
At ev'ry chap.
"Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bairnie, ploughman chiel
Brings hard owrchip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forchammer,
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel
Wi' dinsoine clamour."

Nor are there wanting stanzas of a more solemn kind to bring trembling to our mirth. The Scotsman dying on a battle-field, with the sound of victory in his ear, is a noble picture:—

"Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes!—wi' fearless eye he sees him,
Wi' bluidy han' a welcome gies him,
An' when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin' len'es him
In faint huzzas!"

He steps at once from the serious to the comic: his description of Mither Scotland sitting on her mountain throne, her diadem a little awry, her eyes reeling, and the heather below, becoming moist during her prolonged libations, is equally humorous and irreverent. Those who may suspect that all this singing about liquor arose from a love of it, will be glad to hear that when Nanse Tinnock was told how Burns proposed to toast the Scottish members in her house "nine times a week," she exclaimed, "Him drink in my house! I hardly ken the colour o' his coin."

The year 1785 was a harvest season of verse with Burns. Some of his poems he hesitated for awhile to make public; others he copied, and scattered amongst his friends. Of these one of the most remarkable is "The Jolly Beggars." This drama, which I cannot help considering the most varied and characteristic of the Poet's works, was unknown, save to some west country acquaintances, till after his death, when it came unexpectedly out. The opening seems uttered by another muse than Coila—the sound is of the elder days of verse; but the moment the curtain draws up and shews the actors, the spirit of Burns appears kindling and animating all. It is impossible to deny his presence:—

"First, nicest the fire, in auld red rage,
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm—
She blinkit on her sodger;
An' aye he gied the tosie drab
The tither skelpin klee,

While she held up her greedy gab
Just like an aumos dish.
Ilk smack still, did crack still,
Just like a cadger's whup,
Then staggering and swaggering
He roard'd this ditty up!—

The scene of this rustic drama lies in Mauchline, and the actors are strolling vagrants, who, having acquired meal and money by begging, pilfering, and sleight-of-hand, assemble in Poesie Nansie's, to "toom their pocks and pawn their duds," and

"Gie ae night's discharge to care,"

over the gill-stoup and the quagha. They hold a sort of Beggars' Saturday-night—sing-songs, utter sentiments, and lay down the loose laws of the various classes they represent. The characters are numerous. The maimed soldier, who bore scars both for Scotland and for love; and his doxy, warm with blankets and usquebaugh, who in her youth forsook the sword for the sake of the church, but returned to the drum when age brought reflection. The merry-andrew, who would venture his neck for liquor, who held love to be the half of his craft, and yet was a fool still;—the highland dame who had lightened many a purse—been ducked in many a well: who, with a countryman, had laid the land under contribution from Tweed to Spey, and was only hindered from making a foray, farther south, by the interposition of the "waefu' woodie!" The pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle;—the sturdy tinker, who had "travelled round all Christian ground" in his vocation, and swore by all was swearing worth whenever he was moved;—and, last of all, the "wight of Homer's craft," who, though lame of a foot, had three wives, and could allure the people round him in crowds, when he sung of love and country revelry. All these, and more, sing, and shout, and talk, and act in character! and unite in giving effect to the chorus of a song which claims, for the jovial ragged ring, exemption from the cares which weigh down the sedate and the orderly, and a happiness which refuses to wait on the train-attended carriage, or on the sober bed of matrimony. The curtain drops as they all shout,

"A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest."

There is nothing in the language which, for life and character, approaches this singular "Cantata." The Beggar's Opera is a burial compared to it; it bears some resemblance to the Wallenstein's camp of Schiller, as translated by Lord Francis Egerton; the same variety, and the same license of action and speech distinguish both.

The origin of the Cantata is worth relating. Mauchline ale, and Mauchline maidens, fre-

quently brought the Poet from Moss-giel, which lies but some half-a-mile distant. He frequented the public house of John Dow on those occasions, in the immediate vicinity of the scene of "The Jolly Beggars." The house of Poesie Nansie, *alias* Agnes Gibson, stands opposite nearly to the church-yard gate. One night it happened that James Smith of Mauchline, and Burns, on their way up the street, heard the sound of "meikle fun and jokin'" in Nansie's hostelry, and saw lights streaming from the fractured windows. On entering, they found a company of wandering mendicants enjoying themselves over their dear Kilbagie. They were welcomed with cheers, entered into the humours of the scene, called for more liquor, and the noise and fun grew fast and furious. Burns paid much attention to an old soldier, with a "wooden arm and leg," whose drollery was unbounded. In a few days he rough-wrote the Cantata, and shewed it amongst his friends. He gave the only copy now known to be in existence to David Woodburn; it was lately in the hands of Thomas Stewart of Greenock.

It is probable that the Poet found it an easier task to delineate the characters, and indite the songs of the Cantata, than to endow the "Mouse," and the "Daisy" with sentiments of terror and of pity. A common ploughman would have stamped his tacketed shoe upon the one, saying "Down, vermin!" or helped the furrow over upon the other, pronouncing it a weed. With far other feelings the ploughman of Moss-giel saw the ruin of the one, and the destruction of the other. "The verses to the Mouse and the Mountain Daisy," says Gilbert, "were composed on the occasions, and while the author was holding the plough. I could point out the particular spot where each was composed. Holding the plough was a favourite situation with Robert for poetic compositions, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise. Several of the poems were written for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the author." When the coulter passed through the nest of leaves and stubble, the Poet assured the timid mouse, as it fled in terror, that the best laid schemes of men were frustrated, as well as those of mice; and that though its house was laid in ruins, and winter afforded no materials for constructing a new one, still its lot was bliss compared with his own. It was touched only with the passing, while he was affected with the past—felt the present, and dreaded the future. A similar train of sentiment runs through the Daisy: the Poet buries its opening bloom with the plough, and grieves that he cannot save a thing so lovely; nay, lest the flower should mistake the crash of the cruel coulter for the pressure of some gentler thing, he exclaims, with equal tenderness and beauty:—

"Alas ! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy wet,
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east."

He suddenly turns from the fate of the flower to his own, and draws the same dark conclusions as he did in the "Mouse ;"

"Even thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date ;
Stern Ruin's plough-share drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom ;
Till, crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom !"

His poetry abounds in melancholy predictions about himself ; he had visions of beauty and of grandeur, but along with them came darker visions : want and ruin, sorrow and neglect, death and the grave. The immortality conferred on this humble flower escaped not the observation of Wordsworth as he passed, in 1833, through the "Land of Burns."

"Myriads of Daisies have shone forth in flower
Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
Have passed away less happy than the One
That by the unwilling ploughshare died to prove
The tender charm of poetry and love."

The fine poem of "Man was made to Mourn" was composed by Burns for the purpose of bringing forward a favourite sentiment.—"He used to remark to me," says Gilbert, "that he could not well conceive a more mortifying picture of human life than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be illustrated, the elegy of 'Man was made to Mourn' was composed." The germ of the composition may be found in "The Life and Age of Man," which the Poet's mother was wont to sing to his grand-uncle. The same sentiment is common to both ; the same form of expression, and the same words may be traced in every verse ; "Man is made to mourn," is the introductory exclamation of the old ; "Man was made to mourn" is the chorus of the new. Nor is the earlier poem without pathos and force ; the periods of man's life are compared to the months of the year : the child is born in January, flourishes in July, and dies in December : the parallel is well maintained :—

"Then cometh May, gallant and gay,
When fragrant flowers do thrive,
The child is then become a man,
Of age twenty-and-five.
December fell, both sharp and snell,
Makes flowers creep to the ground ;
Then man's threescore, both sick and sore,
No soundness in him found."

To make each month of the year correspond with five years of a man's life, the moralizing bard of the year sixteen hundred and fifty-three

extinguished the faculties of man at sixty ; the bard of seventeen hundred and eighty-six says nothing of life's duration, but sings the sorrows of him who, overwrought and abject, has to beg leave to toil, from a lordly fellow-worm, who scorns his poor petition, and turns him over to idleness and woe. The question which the Poet asks is one not easily answered by the oppressor :—

"If I'm design'd yon lording's slave,
By Nature's law design'd,
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind ?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty or scorn ?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn ?"

The sage of the banks of Ayr intimates to the indignant bard that a future state, where the great and the wealthy cease from troubling, is the only hope and refuge of those—"who weary laden mourn." His own desolate condition and dreary prospects raised those darksome ideas.

In the truly noble poem of the "Vision" Burns imagines himself seated, in a winter night, by his fire, which burns reluctantly : wearied with the flail, he proceeds to muse on wasted time. In his sight the scene is dark enough ; he has spent the prime of youth in making rhymes for fools to sing ; he has neglected advice which would have placed him at the head of a market ; and now, "half-mad, half-fed, half-sarket," he is sitting undistinguished and poor. Stung with these reflections, he starts up, and is about to swear to refrain rhyme till his latest breath, when the door opens, the fire flames brighter, and a strange and lovely lady comes blushing to his side :—

"Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs,
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows ;
I took her for some Scottish muse,
By that same token ;
An' come to stop those reckless vows
Wou'd soon been broken."

His surmise was just : she was the Muse of Kyle—his own inspirer ; nay, she had a handsome leg like his Mauchline Jean, and looked the express image of his own mind :—

"A hair-brain'd, sentimental trace,
Was strongly marked in her face,
A wildy-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her ;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honour."

On her mantle were pictured the district and heroes of Kyle ; but she came to speak, and not to be looked at. She claimed Burns for her own bard ; told him to lament his luckless lot no longer ; that he was there to fulfil the social plan of Nature, and form a not unim-

portant link in the great chain of being. She was intimate with all his outgoings. Her words are useful to the biographer; they exhibit the Poet in his studious moods:—

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar,
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove through the sky;
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye."

She observed, too, that beauty agitated his frame—communicated to his tongue words of persuasion and grace, and inspired him with musical and voluntary numbers: she saw more—

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven—
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven."

His visiter assured him that the wealth of Potosi, or the regard of monarchs, could not at all equal the pleasure he would feel as a rustic poet, and entreated him to fan the tuneful flame, preserve his dignity, and trust for protection to the universal plan of the Creator:—

"And wear thou this,"—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head;
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away."

Frequent bursts of religious feeling, and a fine spirit of morality, are visible in much that Burns wrote; yet only one of his poems is expressly dedicated to devotion—"The Cotter's Saturday Night." The origin of this noble strain is related by his brother:—"Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent sober head of a family, introducing family worship. The hint of the plan and title of the poem were taken from Fergusson's 'Farmer's Ingle.' When Robert had not some pleasure in view, in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together, when the weather was favourable, on the Sunday afternoons (those precious breathing times to the labouring part of the community), and enjoyed such Sundays as would make us regret to see their number abridged. It was in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the Author repeat 'the Cotter's Saturday Night.'"

The poem is a picture of cottage devotion, by a hand more solicitous about accuracy than effect; for no one knew better than Burns that invention could not heighten, nor art embellish, a scene in which man holds intercourse

with heaven. His natural good taste told him that his work-day burning impetuosity of language, and intrepid freedom of illustration, were unsuitable here; he calmed down his style into an earnest and touching simplicity, which has been mistaken by critics for tamedness; but the strength of the poem is proved by the numerous and beautiful images, all of a devotional character, which it impresses on the mind. Religion is the leading feature of the whole; but love in its virgin state, and patriotism in its purity, mingle with it, and give a gentle tinge, rather than a decided colour to the performance. The scene is peculiar to Scotland. With what natural art the Poet introduces us to the Cotter, and to his happy home, and gradually prepares us, by a succession of solemn images, for the opening of the Bible and the pouring out of prayer!

The winter day is darkening into night, the blackening trains of crows seek the pine-tree tops, and the toil-worn cotter lays together his spades and hoes, and, "hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend," walks homewards over the moor:—

"At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher through,
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise and glee,
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnille;
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wife's smile,
The sleeping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil."

Presently the elder children, released by Saturday night from their weekly servitude among the neighbouring farmers, come "drapping in;" and Jenny, their eldest hope, now woman grown, shews a "braw new gown," or puts her wages into her parents' hands, to aid them, should they require it. Amid them the anxious mother sits, and, with her needle and shears,

"Gars auld claes look amais as weel 's the new,
The father mixes a' with admonition due."

The admonition of this good man to his children is, to be obedient to those above them; to mind their labours, nor be idle when unobserved; and chiefly to fear the Lord, and duly, morn and night, implore his aid and counsel. While this is going on, a gentle rap is heard at the door, and a strappan youth, who "takes the mother's e'e," is introduced by Jenny as a neighbour lad, who, among other things, had undertaken, to see her safely home. The visit is well taken, for he is neither wild nor worthless, but come of honest parents, and is, moreover, blate and bashful, and for inward joy can scarce behave himself. The mother knows well what makes him so grave; the father converses about horses and ploughs, while the supper-table is spread, and milk from her only

cow, and a "well-hained cheese," of a peculiar flavour, and a twelvemonth old, "sin lint was in the bell," are placed by the frugal and happy mother before the lothful stranger.

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle w.e.;
'The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha' bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And 'Let us worship God!' he says, with solemn air.

The canker-tooth of the most envious criticism cannot well fasten on a work in every respect so perfect; nor, in expatiating upon it, are we going out of the direct line of biography: it is known to be, in part, a picture of the household of William Burness. From pictures of national manners and sentiment we must turn to matters more personal.

Of the maidens of Kyle, who contributed by their charms of mind, or person, to the witchery of the love songs of Burns, I can give but an imperfect account. The young woman who "had pledged her soul to meet him in the field of matrimony, yet jilted him with peculiar circumstances of mortification," he has not named; and I suspect her charms, real or imaginary, have remained unsung. The Tibbie who scorned the advances of the Poet, and "spak na, but gade by like stoure," was a neighbouring laird's daughter, with a portion of two acres of peat-moss, and twenty pounds Scots. The Peggy who inspired some of his early lyrics was the sister of a Carrick farmer, a girl prudent as well as beautiful. The Nannie, who lived among the mosses near the Lugar, was a farmer's daughter, Agnes Fleming by name, and charmed unconsciously the sweet song of "My Nannie O" from him, by the elegance of her person and the melody of her voice. "Green grow the Rashes," was a general tribute paid to the collective charms of the lasses of Kyle; there were few with whom he had not held tryste

"Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

Some of those maidens were but, perhaps, the chance inspirers of his lyric strains. "Highland Mary," and "Mary in Heaven," of whom he has so passionately sung, was a native of Ardrossan. Those who think that poetry embalms high names alone, ladies of birth and rank, must prepare to be disappointed, for Mary Campbell was a peasant's daughter, and lived, when she captivated the Poet, in the humble situation of dairy-maid in "The Castle of Montgomery." That she was beautiful, we have other testimony than that of Burns: her charms attracted gazers, if not wooers, and she was exposed to the allurements of wealth. She

withstood all temptation, and returned the affection of the Poet with the fervour of innocence and youth. "After a pretty long trial," says Burns, "of the most ardent, reciprocal affection, we met, by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayr, where we spent a day in taking a farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of the autumn following, she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed, when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to her grave in a few days, before I could even learn of her illness."—"This adieu was performed," says Cromek, "in a striking and moving way; the lovers stood on each side of a small brook, they laved their hands in the stream, and, holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted never to meet again!"

The Bible on which they vowed their vows was lately in the possession of the sister of Mary Campbell, at Ardrossan. On the first volume is written by the hand of Burns: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely; I am the Lord—*Leviticus*, chap. xix., v. 12." On the second volume, the same hand has written: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.—*St. Matthew*, chap. v., v. 33." And on the blank leaves of both volumes is impressed his mark as a mason, and also signed below, "Robert Burns, Mossiel." These are touching insertions, but not more so than the verses in which he has embodied the parting scene:—

"How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birch,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade,
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary!"

To the same affectionate young creature, Burns addressed a strain of scarcely inferior beauty, beginning with

"Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?"

Nor did he forget her worth in after-life; his heart and fancy frequently travelled back to early scenes of joy and sorrow. A tress of her hair is still preserved: it is very long and very light and shining. Who the Mary Morison was on whom he wrote one of his earliest songs, I have not been able to discover; nor do I know the name of the heroine of "Cessnock Banks." Their beauty seems like that of many others, to have passed suddenly over him, touching his fancy without affecting his heart. The Eliza.

from whom he seems so loth to part, in one of his songs, was, I am told by John Galt, a relative of his, and less beautiful than witty.

To the charms of Jean Armour I have already alluded. This young woman, the daughter of a devout man and master-mason, lived in Mauchline, and was distinguished less for the beauty of her person, than for the grace of her dancing and the melody of her voice. Burns seems to have become attached to her soon after the loss of his Highland Mary. In one of his joyous moments, he warned the maidens of Mauchline against reading inflammatory novels.—"Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons" served only as snares, he said, for their innocence:—

"Such witching books are baited hooks
For rakish rooks, like Rob Moss-giel."

Who those maidens were he tells us in rhyme:—

"In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';—
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In Lon'on or Paris they'd gotten it a'.

—Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw;
There 'a beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton,
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'."

How the Poet and his Jean became acquainted is easily imagined by those who know the facilities for meetings of the young, which fairs, races, dances, weddings, house-heatings, kirnsuppers, and bleaching scenes on burn-banks afford; of the growth of affection between them it is less easy to give an account; we must trace it by the uncertain light of his poetry.

[John Blane,* who was for four years and a half farm-servant in the Burns' family at Lochlea and Moss-giel, relates the following interesting circumstances respecting the attachment of the poet to Miss Armour:—There was a singing school at Mauchline, which Blane attended. Jean Armour was also a pupil, and he soon became aware of her talents as a vocalist. He even contracted a kind of attachment to this young woman, though only such as a country lad of his degree might entertain for the daughter of a substantial country mason. One night there was a *rocking* at Moss-giel, where a lad named Ralph Sillar sung a number of songs in what was considered a superior style. When Burns and Blane had retired to their usual sleeping place in the stable-loft, the former

asked the latter what he thought of Sillar's singing, to which Blane answered that the lad thought so much of it himself, and had so many airs about it, that there was no occasion for others expressing a favourable opinion—yet, he added, "I would not give Jean Armour for a score of him." "You are always talking of this Jean Armour," said Burns, "I wish you could contrive to bring me to see her." Blane readily consented to do so, and next evening, after the plough was loosed, the two proceeded to Mauchline for that purpose. Burns went into a public-house, and Blane went into the singing school, which chanced to be kept in the floor above. When the school was dismissing, Blane asked Jean Armour if she would come to see Robert Burns, who was below, and anxious to speak to her. Having heard of his poetical talents, she said she would like much to see him, but was afraid to go without a female companion. This difficulty being overcome by the frankness of a Miss Morton—the Miss Morton of the Six Mauchline Belles—Jean went down to the room where Burns was sitting. "From that time," (Blane adds very naively) "I had little of the company of Jean Armour."]

In the "Epistle of Davie" he alludes to Jean Armour by name, and calls her his own; in the "Vision" he compliments the Muse of Kyle by comparing her clean, straight, and taper limbs to those of his bonny Jean; and, in one of his lyrics, he speaks of the sighs and vows which have passed between them among the sequestered hills. It would seem, however, that during the season of their courtship the Poet felt less sure of the continuance of her affection than he had looked for, and something like change may be inferred from his omitting a verse in the "Address to the Deil," in which he likened Eve to Jean Armour:—

"A dancin', sweet, young, handsome quean,
Wi' guileless heart."

Gilbert charges his brother with seeing charms in some of the maidens of Kyle which others could not observe; but that may be said of all beautiful things. The ladies whom he celebrated, in the latter days of his inspiration, were—some of them at least—eminently lovely; and we all know that he has imputed no more merit to his Jean than what she possessed. Burns assured Professor Walker that his first desire to excel as a poet arose from the influence of the tender passion; and he informed others that all

* This individual is now (1838) residing at Kilmarnock. With Robert Burns, who was eight years his senior, he slept for a long time in the same bed, in the stable loft, at Moss-giel. Burns had a little deal table with a drawer in it, which he kept constantly beside the bed, with a small desk on the top of it. The best of his poems were here written during the hours of rest; the table-drawer being the depository in which he kept them. The "Cotter's Saturday Night," the "Lament," and the "Vision," were thus composed in the poor garret over a small farmer's stable.

He used to employ Blane to read the poems to him, immediately after their composition, that he might be able the more effectually to detect faults in them. When dissatisfied with a particular passage, he would stop the reading, make an alteration, and then desire his companion to proceed. Blane was often awakened by him during the night, that he might serve him in this capacity. The bard of Kyle was a most rigid critic of his own compositions, and burned many with which he was displeased.

the heroines of his songs were real, and not imaginary. He dealt in

"No idly feign'd poetic pains,
No fabl'd tortures quaint and tame."

As the Poet rose, and the lover triumphed, the farmer sunk. The farm of Moss-giel lies high, on a cold, wet bottom. During the first four years of the lease, instead of kindly and congenial seasons, the springs were frosty and late, the summers moist and cold; and to this the Poet glances when he makes the old dame, in Halloween, relate her experiences:—

"The simmer had been cauld and wat,
And stuff was unco green."

Frosty springs and late cold summers could not be foreseen, but any one might have known high lying land on a wet bottom. Seasons in which the sun is almost scorching other grounds are most congenial for such soils, and no one should venture upon a farm which requires something like a miracle in the weather to render it productive. That Burns took pleasure in the labours of agriculture we have the assurance of many a voice: he often alludes to the holding of the plough, the turning of a handsome furrow; and he rejoices, too, in the growing corn, sees it fall before the sickle, with something of a calculating eye, and raises the rick, and coats it over with broom against sleet and snow, with all the foresight of a farmer. Of his prowess with the flail, he says:—

"The thresher's weary flinging tree
The lee-laing day had tir'd me."

And Gilbert says, with the scythe Robert excelled all competitors: he had the sleight which is necessary with strength and activity. In ploughing he was likewise skilful: in the "Farmer's Address to his Mare," evidently alluding to himself, he says:—

"Aft thee and I in aught-hours gaun,
In guid March weather,
Hae turned sax rood beside our han'
For days thegither."

Elsewhere the Poet speaks of his toil in committing the seed-corn to the furrow, and makes the muse plead it as an excuse for declining labouring on Parnassus in the month of April:—

"Forjeskit sair, wi' weary legs,
Rattlin' the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing through among the naigs
Their ten-hours bite,
My akwart Muse sair pleads and begs
I wadna write."

Of his farming establishment he gives us some insight, in his facetious inventory to the surveyor of the taxes: it is pleasing to go to the homestead of even the cold and ungenial Moss-giel, and look at the "gudes, and gear, and graith," with Burns for our guide:—

"Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I have four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew afore a pettle.
My lan-afore's a gude auld has-been,
An' wight and wifu' a' his days been.
My lan-ahin's a weel gaun fillie;
That aft has borne me hame frae Killie.
An' your auld burro' mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime.
My fur-abin's a worthy beast
As e'er in tug or tow was trac'd.
The fourth's a Highland Donald hastie,
A damnd' red-wud Kilburnie blastie!
Forbye a cowl, o' cows the wale,
As ever ran afore a tail."

Of his milk-cows and calves, ewes and lambs, the mandate required no specification; the Poet proceeds to his farming implements: they are far from numerous:—

"Wheel carriages I ha'e but few,
Three carts, an' twa are feckly new;
An auld wheelbarrow, mair for token,
Ac leg and baih the trams are broken."

Ploughs, harrows, shel-bands, rollers, spades, hoes, and fanners were not taxed, and are omitted, which I am sorry for; we come now to the members of his household:—

"For men I've three mischievous boys,
Run deils for rantin' and for noise;
A gaudsman ane, a thrasher t' other,
Wee Davoc hauds the nowt in fother."

Nor is the Bard unmindful of maintaining rule and spreading information amongst his menials:—

"I rule them as I ought, discreetly,
An' aften labour them completely;
And aye on Sundays duly, nightly,
I on the questions targe them tightly."

With respect to maid-servants, as his mother and sisters managed the in-door economy of the house, he had no occasion for any: he desired besides, he said, to be kept out of temptation; neither had he a wife, and as for children, one more had been sent to him than he desired:—

"My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,
She stares the daddie in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace."

Burns saw in the failure of the farm the coming ruin of his mother's household, and, despairing of success in agriculture, revived a notion which he had long entertained of going out as a sort of steward to the plantations, a situation which, for a small salary, requires the presence of many high qualities. Nor did he take this resolution one moment too soon: his poetic account of his condition and sufferings is not at all poetical:—

"To tremble under Fortune's cummock,
On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock,
For his proud, independent stomach,
Could ill agree."

But bodily discomfort was not all: he might,

to use his own language, have braved the bitter blast of misfortune, which, long mustering over his head, was about to descend; but sorrows of a tender nature, from which there was no escape, came pouring upon him in a flood.

This part of the Poet's history has been painted variously: delicacy towards the living, and respect for the dead, seemed to call for gentle handling; but this could not always be obtained; for rude hands were but too ready to aggravate the outline, and darken the colours. The courtship between Burns and Jean Armour continued for several years; and there is no question, had fortune permitted, but that they would have been man and wife the first year of their acquaintance. But Burns was not poor only—he had no chance of becoming rich, and the day of marriage was placed at the mercy of fortune. There were other obstacles: Jean was not only the daughter of a man rigid and devout, but the favourite child of one of the believers in the glory of the Old Light. Her father discountenanced the addresses which “a profane scoffer” and “irreligious rhymers” was making to his child, and the lovers, denied the sanction of paternal care, and the shelter of the domestic roof, had recourse to stolen meetings under the cloud of night, to twilight interviews under the green-wood tree; to the solace of “a cannie hour at e’en,” and those “sighs and vows among the knowes” of which the Poet has sung with so much passion. In protracted courtship there is always danger; prudence seldom takes much care of the young and the warm-hearted: Jean was not out of her teens, and thought more of her father's ungentleness than of her own danger; the Poet's respect for sweetness and innocence protected her for a while—but he was doomed to feel what he afterwards sung:—

“Wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
Wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?”

These conveyings home in the dark, and meetings under “the milk-white thorn,” ended in the Poet being promised to be made a father before he had become a husband. This, to one so destitute and utterly poor as Burns, was a stunning event: but that was not the worst;—the father of Jean Armour heard, with much anguish, of his favourite daughter's condition; and when, on her knees before him, she implored forgiveness, and shewed the marriage lines—as the private acknowledgment of marriage, without the sanction of the kirk, is called—his anguish grew into anger which overflowed all bounds, and heeded neither his daughter's honour nor her husband's fame. He snatched her marriage certificate from her, threw it into the fire, and commanded her to think herself no longer the wife of the Poet. It must be accepted as a proof of paternal power

that Jean trembled and obeyed: she forgot that Burns was still her husband in the sight of Heaven, and according to the laws of man: she refused to see him, or hearken to aught he could say; and, in short, was ruled in everything by the blind hatred of her father.

[Another event occurred to add to the torments of the unhappy poet. Jean, to avoid the immediate pressure of her father's displeasure, went about the month of May (1786) to Paisley, and took refuge with a relation of her mother, one Andrew Purdie, a wright. There was at Paisley a certain Robert Wilson, a good looking young weaver, a native of Mauchline, and who was realising wages to the amount of perhaps three pounds a-week by his then flourishing profession. Jean Armour had danced with this “gallant weaver” at the Mauchline dancing-school balls, and, besides her relative Purdie, she knew no other person in Paisley. Being in much need of a small supply of money, she found it necessary to apply to Mr. Wilson, who received her kindly, although he did not conceal that he had a suspicion of the reason of her visit to Paisley. When the reader is reminded that village life is not the sphere in which high-wrought and romantic feelings are most apt to flourish, he will be prepared in some measure to learn that Robert Wilson not only relieved the necessities of the fair applicant, but formed the wish to possess himself of her hand. He called for her several times at Purdie's, and informed her that, if she should not become the wife of Burns, he would engage himself to none while she remained unmarried. Mrs. Burns long after assured a female friend that she never gave the least encouragement to Wilson; but, nevertheless, his visits occasioned some gossip, which soon found its way to Mauchline, and entered the soul of the poet like a demoniac possession. He now seems to have regarded her as lost to him for ever, and that not purely through the objections of her relations, but by her own cruel and perjured desertion of one whom she acknowledged as her husband. These particulars are requisite to make us fully understand much of what Burns wrote at this time, both in prose and verse. Long afterwards, he became convinced that Jean, by no part of her conduct with respect to Wilson, had given him just cause for jealousy: it is not improbable that he learned in time to make it the subject of sport, and wrote the song, “Where Cart rins rowing to the sea,” in jocular allusion to it. But for months—and it is distressing to think that these were the months during which he was putting his matchless poems for the first time to press—he conceived himself the victim of a faithless woman, and life was to him, as he himself describes it,

——— “a weary dream,
The dream of one that never wauks.” CHAMBERS, J.

What the Poet thought of all this we have abundance of testimony. Though his indignation against Mr. Armour could not but be high, it is to his honour that he refrained from giving him further pain than he had inflicted already: he spoke, too, of Jean, more in sorrow than in anger. In the first outburst of passion, on finding that she refused to call herself his wife, and had allowed her marriage lines to be burnt, he indulged in a sort of bitter mirth; and, in a poem of great merit, and greater freedom of expression, sang of the vexation which Kyle and her maidens must feel at parting with one who could doubly soothe them with love-making and song. He alludes to the cause of his departure to the West Indies—

"He saw Misfortune's cauld nor-west,
Lang mustering up a bitter blae;
A Jillet brak his heart at last,
 Ill may she be!
So took a birth afore the mast,
 An' owre the sea."

He speaks, too, of his way of life, and accounts for the poverty of a poet with a clear income of seven pounds a year!—

"He ne'er was gien to great misguiding,
Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in;
Wi' him it ne'er was under hiding,
 He dealt it free!
The Muse was a' that he took pride in,
 That's owre the sea."

This mirthful mood did not last long; there is little gaiety in his letter to David Bryce, of June 12th, 1786.—"I am still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say in the place of hope. What poor ill-advised Jean thinks of her conduct, I don't know; but one thing I do know—she has made me completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her; and, to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all. My poor dear unfortunate Jean! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely: I foresee she is in the road to, I am afraid, eternal ruin. May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her; and may his grace be with her and bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure: the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then farewell, dear old Scotland! and farewell, dear ungrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more." In this touching letter the Poet sets off his own sufferings against Jean

Armour's shame; and we may calculate their depth and acuteness from his looking on her as ungrateful.

He gave vent to the same feeling in the most pathetic of all modern poems, "The Lament for the unfortunate Issue of a Friend's Amour." every stanza is most exquisitely mournful:—

"No idly-feign'd poetic pains—
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame;
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;
The oft-attested Pow'r's above,
The promis'd father's tender name—
These were the pledges of my love!"

The account rendered by Gilbert, which makes Robert consent to the destruction of the marriage lines, is at least doubtful. In truth there was much anguish on all sides; and, condemning the stern father as we do, we cannot help reverencing the feeling which sacrificed his daughter's peace in this world, in the belief that he was securing happiness for her in the next. That he doubted her constancy, I have heard affirmed by those who had an opportunity of knowing; and, to remove temptation from her path, he acquiesced in the Poet's resolution to push his fortune in Jamaica; though there is no foundation, perhaps, for the surmise that he more than tolerated the parish authorities to pursue Burns, according to law, for the maintenance of the promised babe, in order to hasten his departure. This is, nevertheless, countenanced by the circumstance of his ability to keep the child. Had he promised this, the Poet would not have been obliged to skulk "from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a gaol;" and he means more than the usual parochial authorities, when he says—"Some ill-advised persons had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels."

[In this dark period, or immediately before it, the poet signed an instrument, in anticipation of his immediately leaving the kingdom, by which he devised all property of whatever kind he might leave behind, including the copyright of his poems, to his brother Gilbert, in consideration of the latter having undertaken to support his daughter Elizabeth, the issue of "Elizabeth Paton in Largside." Intimation of this instrument was publicly made at the Cross of Ayr, two days after, by William Chalmers, writer. If he had been upon better terms with the Armours, it seems unlikely that he would have thus devised his property without a respect for the claims of his offspring by Jean.

After this we hear no more of the legal severities of Mr. Armour—the object of which was, not to abridge the liberty of the unfortunate Burns, but to drive him away from the country, so as to leave Jean more effectually disengaged. The Poems now appeared, and probably had some effect in allaying the hostility of the old

man towards their author. It would at least appear that, at the time of Jean's accouchement, the "skulking" had ceased, and the parents of the young woman were not so cruel as to forbid his seeing her.

At this time, Blane had removed from Moss-giel to Mauchline, and become servant to Mr. Gavin Hamilton; but Burns still remembered his old acquaintance. When, in consequence of information sent by the Armour's as to Jean's situation, the poet came from Moss-giel to visit her, he called in passing at Mr. Hamilton's, and asked John to accompany him to the house. Blane went with him to Mr. Armour's, where, according to his recollection, the bard was received with all desirable civility. Jean held up a pretty female infant to Burns, who took it affectionately in his arms, and, after keeping it a little while, returned it to the mother, asking the blessing of God Almighty upon her and her infant. He was turning away to converse with the other people in the room, when Jean said, archly, "But this is not all—here is another baby," and handed him a male child, which had been born at the same time. He was greatly surprised, but took that child too for a little while into his arms, and repeated his blessing upon it.* (This child was afterwards named Robert, and still lives: the girl was named Jean, but only lived fourteen months.) The mood of the melancholy poet then changed to the mirthful, and the scene was concluded by his giving the ailing lady a hearty caress, and rallying her on this promising beginning of her history as a mother.

It would appear, from the words used by the poet on this occasion, that he was not without hope of yet making good his matrimonial alliance with Jean. This is rendered the more likely by the evidence which exists of his having, about this time, entertained a confident hope of obtaining an excise appointment, through his friends Hamilton and Aiken; in which case he would have been able to present a respectable claim upon the countenance of the Armour's. But this prospect ended in disappointment; and there is reason to conclude that, in a very short time after the accouchement, he was once more forbidden to visit the house in which his children and *all but wife* resided. There was at this time a person named John Kennedy, who travelled the district on horseback as a mercantile agent, and was on intimate terms with Burns. One day, as he was passing Moss-giel, Burns stopped him, and made the request that he would return to Mauchline with a present for his "poor wife." Kennedy consented, and the poet hoisted upon the pommel of the saddle a bag filled with the delicacies of the farm. He proceeded to Mr.

Armour's house, and requested permission to see Jean, as the bearer of a message and a present from Robert Burns. Mrs. Armour violently protested against his being admitted to an interview, and bestowed upon him sundry unceremonious appellations for being the friend of such a man. She was, however, overruled in this instance by her husband, and Kennedy was permitted to enter the apartment where Jean was lying. He had not been there many minutes, when he heard a rushing and screaming in the stair, and, immediately after, Burns burst into the room, followed closely by the Armour's, who seemed to have exhausted their strength in endeavouring to repel his intrusion. Burns flew to the bed, and, putting his cheek to Jean's, and then in succession to those of the slumbering infants, wept bitterly. The Armour's, it is added by Kennedy, who has himself related the circumstances,† remained unaffected by his distress; but whether he was allowed to remain for a short time, or immediately after expelled, is not mentioned. After hearing this affecting anecdote of Burns, "The Lament" may verily appear as arising from

"No idly feigned poetic pains."‡]

Amid all these miseries of mind and sufferings of body, Burns brought out that volume which first told the world that a new and mighty poet had arisen in the land. This, though forced from him by "the luckless star which ruled his lot," had been often present to his contemplation. He resorted to it not so much to gratify his love of fame, as with the hope that the publication would bring money enough to convey him over the Atlantic; nor were friends wanting to aid him in this very moderate desire. It is to the credit of the personal merit of Burns, and to the honour of his associates, that they shrunk not from his side in the trying hour of adversity. Among these, Gavin Hamilton; Robert Aikin, writer, Ayr; John Ballantyne, banker, Ayr; Robert Muir, merchant, Kilmarnock; and William Parker, merchant, Kilmarnock; were the most active and conspicuous. Parker alone subscribed for thirty-five copies. There is little merit in discovering and befriending genius when Fame is sounding her trumpet, and crying, "Behold the man whom the king delighteth to honour!" but to mark talents, and aid them, when the possessor is struggling out of darkness into light, shews either great generosity or a fine judgment, or both. Thus supported, he was enabled to enter into terms with Wilson, a printer, in Kilmarnock. The Poet undertook to supply manuscript, walk daily into Kilmarnock to correct the press, and pay all the expenses incident to printing six hundred copies.

* [Ultimately, while Jean continued to nurse the female baby, the boy was transferred to the charge of the family at

Moss-giel, where poverty condemned him to be reared upon the milk of a young cow.]

† [In a work entitled Cobbett's Magazine.] ‡ CHAMBERS.

Of what passed in the mind of Burns at this moment, we have his own account to Moore:—"I weighed," said he, "my productions as impartially as was in my power. I thought they had merit; and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver, or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits. To know myself had been all along my constant study; I weighed myself alone, I balanced myself with others, I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design in my formation, where the lights and shades in character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but, at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, having got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty." "Wee Johnnie," the printer, the body without a soul of the poet's epigram, shrewdly remarked that a poem of a grave nature would be better for beginning with: Burns acted on the hint, and, in walking between Kilmarnock and Mossiel, composed, or rather completed, the "Twa Dogs." At that period, ruin had him so effectually in the wind, that even food became scanty; a piece of oat-cake and a bottle of two-penny ale made his customary dinner, when correcting the first edition of his immortal works, and of this he was not always certain.

In July, 1786, the poems of Burns made their appearance; he introduced them with a preface, intimating his condition in life, and claiming for them the protection of his country. "Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw, in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toils and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world—always an alien scene—a task uncouth to the poetical mind—these were his motives for courting the muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward. 'Humility,' says Shenstone, 'has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!' If any critic catches at the word genius, the author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities; but otherwise his publishing, in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre below the worst character, which he hopes his worst enemy will ever give him." The heart-warm welcome which his poems received in his own

district, fulfilled the hopes of the Poet; all read who could obtain the book, and all who read applauded; even the children of the Old Light admitted that he was a wondrous rhymist to be a profane person. The whole impression was soon disposed of; the fears of "Wee Johnnie," the printer, anent remuneration, were allayed, and twenty pounds and odd remained in the pockets of the wondering bard, after defraying all expenses. The first use he made of his good fortune was to renew his application for a situation in the West Indies, and lay aside a sum sufficient to waft him over the sea. With the desire of keeping such a genius at home, his steadfast friends, Hamilton and Aiken, again sought to obtain him an appointment in the excise—an evil which awaited him on a later day.

With some, the rising of this western star in poetry was looked for; his poems in manuscript had been widely circulated in Ayr-shire, but to Scotland at large his appearance was unexpected; and had a July sun risen on a December morning, the unwonted light could not have given greater surprise. The fame of the bard of Mauchline flew east, west, north, and south. A love of poetry belongs as much to the humble classes of the north as to the high; and to people who had much of Ramsay and Fergusson by heart, the more lofty and passionate poetry of Burns could not fail to be welcome. The milkmaid sung his songs, the ploughmen and shepherds repeated his poems, while the old and the sagacious quoted his verses in conversation, glad to find that matters of fancy might be made useful. My father, who was fond of poetry, procured the volume from a Cameronian clergyman, with this remarkable admonition, "Keep it out of the way of your children, John, lest ye catch them, as I caught mine, reading it on the sabbath."

"It is hardly possible," says Heron, "to express with what eager admiration and delight the poems were everywhere received. They eminently possessed all those qualities which can contribute to render any literary work quickly and permanently popular. They were written in a phraseology, of which all the powers were universally felt; and which being at once antique, familiar, and now rarely written, was hence fitted to serve all the dignified and picturesque uses of poetry, without making it unintelligible. The imagery, the sentiments, were at once faithfully natural, and irresistibly impressive and interesting. Those topics of satire and scandal in which the rustic delights, that humorous delineation of character, and that witty association of ideas, familiar and striking, yet not naturally allied to one another, which has force to shake his sides with laughter; those fancies of superstition at which he still wonders and trembles; those affecting

sentiments and images of true religion, which are at once dear and awful to his heart, were represented by Burns with all a poet's magic power. Old and young, high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant, all were alike delighted, agitated, and transported."

To many copies of his works the Poet added other attractions: he caused blank leaves to be inserted, on which he wrote such favourite sallies of love or humour as he had refrained from printing; or, more solicitous still to please, inscribed neat and complimentary lines, addressed to those who, by their taste and station, might either feel his merit, or be disposed to patronise him. Of those whom he sought to propitiate, one of the most eminent was Dugald Stewart: during the summer months that the professor and his first lady lived at Catrine, Burns was sometimes their guest; and much as they were pleased with his verses, they were still more so with his conversation, which was unaffected and manly. During one of his visits he was introduced to Lord Daer, and as this seems to have been the first time he had met a lord, he recorded the event in rhymes equally vigorous and untranslatable; his emotions are described as no one but himself could have described them:—

"But oh! for Hogarth's matchless power!
To show Sir Bardie's willowy glow'r,
An' how he star'd an' stammer'd,
When goavan, as if led wi' branks,
An' stumpan on his ploughman shanks,
He in the parlour hammer'd."

His poems touched the gentlest hearts. Mrs. Stewart, of Stair, a lady accomplished as well as kind, was one of the first to admire them, and to renew her acquaintance with the author; neither her kindness, nor that of the Stewarts of Catrine, were forgotten. Upon the robe of Coila he depicted perhaps too many complimentary things: in the "Brigs of Ayr" he is more select:—

"Next followed Courage, with his martial stride,
From where the Feal wild-woody coverts hide;
Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
A female form, came from the tow'rs of Stair;
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode
From simple Catrine, their long-lev'd abode."

Nor did Burns think this enough: the woods of Catrine are mentioned in one or more of his succeeding songs, and the Lady of the Towers of Stair is remembered, in a lyric of no common beauty. He imagines himself straying on the banks of Afton Water, and perceives the heroine asleep among the flowers on its side. He then addresses the stream, and promises to sing a song to its honour if it will flow softly, nor disturb the repose of one so sweet and beautiful. The lady understood the forward ways of the muse, and smiled. Mrs. Scott, of Wauchope-house, a painter and poetess, in a rhym-

ing letter of considerable ease and gaiety, intimated her admiration of the "Cantie, witty, rhyming ploughman." In his answer Burns alludes to his aspirations, when "beardless, young, and blate," with great felicity:—

"Even then a wish, I mind its power,
A wish, that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least."

But the friendship which the various biographers of Burns seem to be most solicitous about is that of Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop. That lady, the daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace, of Craigie, was proud of her descent from the race of Elderslie, and proud of her acquirements, which were considerable. Nor should we leave unmentioned that she had some talent for rhyme. She had been ailing, and the first advantage which she took of returning health was to read the poems of the Ayr-shire ploughman. She was struck with the beauty, natural and religious, of the "Cotter's Saturday Night."—"The Poet's description of the simple cottagers," she told Gilbert Burns, "operated on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, repelling the demon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted harmony and satisfaction." An express, sent sixteen miles, for half-a-dozen copies of the book, and an invitation to Dunlop-house, attested her sincerity. Nor was the Poet less sincere in his answer—he admired her illustrious ancestor.—"In my boyish days," he observes, "I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur:—

"Syn'e to the Leglen wood when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat."

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half-a-dozen miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and, as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect—foe even then I was a rhymist—that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits." All this was in unison with the feelings of the lady as well as with his own. From this period we must date a friendship which did not close with the Poet's life, and to which we owe many of his most dignified and happy letters.

But the notice of lords, the attention of professors, and the kindness of beauty, were empty, though honourable, things; the twenty pounds, which his speculation in verse brought, diminished rather than increased, and he felt, with a darkening spirit, that he could not live on applause. It never seems to have occurred to any one of his wealthy admirers that he was in a

state of destitution, and that many places of profit existed which he could fill with honour. He who is invited to feast, at a distance, with the powerful and the polite—who has to walk seven miles of rough road to the dinner-table—is expected to write songs on the beautiful—be witty with the witty, and at midnight return to his blanket and his straw, must be considered as having earned his dinner fairly—and this happened often to Burns. All that his poetry brought him was barren applause; and when he consulted “Wee Johnnie” about publishing a second edition, the printer demurred, which so incensed the Poet that he would not speak again on the subject, and refused the generous offers of several of his first and best friends, to subscribe for copies enow to secure Wilson against loss. He now looked seriously to the West Indies, procured the situation of overseer on an estate in Jamaica, belonging to Dr. Douglas, and prepared for departure. Of this all his friends seem to have been aware, but no one interposed. It was now the middle of November, and the sound which his poems had raised in the country began to die away.

There was still one family of influence in the district to whom Burns had not been introduced; and as no one had tried to do this for him, he now resolved to do it for himself. In the preceding July, it seems, he had accidentally met Miss Alexander, of Ballochmyle, a young lady of great beauty, among her native woods on the banks of Ayr. How the river banks looked in those days I know not, but the bard instantly clothed them with flowers, gave odorous dew to the grass, a richer incense to the fields of beans, a sweeter song to the thrush, and a brighter sunshine to the tree-tops; and into this natural shrine introduced his new object of adoration, under the name of “The Lass of Ballochmyle.” Neither elegance of thought nor of expression were wanting to render the compliment acceptable:—

“With careless step I onward stray’d
My heart rejoic’d in nature’s joy,
When musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanc’d to spy;
Her look was like the morning’s eye,
Her air like nature’s vernal smile,
Perfection whisper’d, passing by,
‘Behold the lass of Ballochmyle!’”

As he proceeds with his song, the Bard collects that loveliness is sent into the world for other purposes than to be gazed at, and exclaims, much to the distress of gentle critics and fastidious spinsters—who looked, it seems, for a display of chivalry instead of nature:—

“O! had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,

Tho’ shelter’d in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland’s plain,
Thro’ weary winter’s wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil,
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonny lass of Ballochmyle.”

He copied this fine lyric out in a fair hand, and sent it to Miss Alexander, accompanied by a letter, the composition of which, it is said, cost him more labour than the song. It has not, however, all the happy ease of the verse. Of the song he says:—“The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I dare say, madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *rêveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my muse on the banks of Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers pouring their harmony on every hand with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my way, lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Such was the scene and such the hour, when in a corner of my prospect I spied one of the fairest pieces of Nature’s workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape or met a poet’s eye, those visionary bards excepted who hold converse with aerial beings. Had Calumny and Villany taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object. What an hour of inspiration for a poet! it would have raised plain dull historic prose into metaphor and measure. The enclosed song was the work of my return home; and, perhaps, it but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene.”

What the lady thought of the song we are not told—what Burns thought of her silence he has informed us. She paid no attention to his effusions, and wounded his self-love by her ungracious neglect. Currie and Lockhart have united in defending the “Lass of Ballochmyle.” “Her modesty,” says the first, “might prevent her from perceiving that the muse of Tibullus breathed in this nameless poet, and that her beauty was awakening strains destined to immortality on the banks of the Ayr. Burns was at that time little known, and, where known at all, noted rather for the wild strength of his humour than for those strains of tenderness in which he afterwards so much excelled. To the lady herself, his name, perhaps, had never been mentioned.”—“His verses,” says the latter, “written in commemoration of that passing glimpse of her beauty, are conceived in a strain

* [The exact or direct purpose of this letter has been disguised wilfully, or mistakingly, by Dr. Currie, in consequence of the omission of a concluding sentence, in which the Poet

requested Miss Alexander’s permission to print the verses in the second edition of his poems. This was an object to which the Poet attached some importance. WILSON.]

of luxurious fervour, which, certainly, coming from a man of Burns' station and character, must have sounded very strangely in a delicate maiden's ear." These remarks might have been spared; the man and his poems were well known to all in the west country long before the 18th of November, 1786: we must not suppose Miss Alexander more fastidious and difficult to please, than Mrs. Stewart of Catrine, Mrs. Stewart of Stair, or Mrs. Dunlop, with whom he was living on terms of friendship before that time. He who had written and published "Man was made to mourn," "The Daisy," "The Mouse," and "The Cotter's Saturday Night," was known for more than the wild strength of his humour; nor can we imagine that any lady of education could feel much alarm at the fervour of the song: Miss Alexander knew that poetry and love are brothers, and that the latter acknowledges no other merit than what is personal. The Poet chose, rather than "raise a mortal to the skies," to "bring an angel down." The heroine lived till lately—but she lived to think the honours of the muse the highest that could be conferred on her; the song, elegantly framed, was hung in her chamber, and was carried with her wherever she travelled.

This was the last of his efforts to obtain notice in his native district. He now wrote to his friends, Hamilton and Aiken, saying, he was afraid that his follies would prevent him from enjoying a situation in the Excise, even if it could be procured; he was pining in secret wretchedness; disappointment, pride, and remorse were settling on his vitals like vultures, and in an hour of social mirth his gaiety was the madness of an intoxicated criminal, under the hands of the executioner.—"All these reasons," he says, "urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances everything that can be laid in the scale against it." He wrote in the same strain to others. This was on the 19th of November; on the 20th he enclosed a copy of "Holy Willie's Prayer" to his comrades, Chalmers and M'Adam, desiring it might be burnt, as a thing abominable and wicked, at the Cross of Ayr; and on the twenty-second, he wrote, as he imagined, the last song he was to measure in Caledonia:—

"The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild, inconstant blast.
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,—
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of Ayr."

It was well for the world, and, perhaps, unfortunate for Burns, that, when he had

bid farewell to his friends, put his chest on the way to Greenock, and was about to follow, a letter from Dr. Blacklock overthrew all his schemes. The way this came about has something in it of the romantic. Laurie, minister of London, a kind and steadfast friend, sent a copy of the poems to his friend Dr. Blacklock, a middling poet, but a most worthy man, with unbounded kindness of nature and generosity of soul. Blacklock was blind, and, as he could not read for himself, an almost fatal delay took place: the ship was unmooring, and the Poet on the wing, when his opinion of the poems, and the steps which he advised the author to take, reached the hands of Laurie. The letter was instantly forwarded to Burns, who read it with surprise not unmingled with tears. The blind bard was none of your cold formal men who give guarded opinions—he said what he felt; and, as his heart was in the right place, spoke out with a warmth and an ecstasy new in the province of criticism:

"Many instances have I seen," he says, "of nature's force or beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It has been told me, by a gentleman to whom I showed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were, therefore, much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertions of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published in my memory."—"This encouragement," says Burns, "fired me so much, that away I posted to Edinburgh, without a single acquaintance or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence on my zenith for once made a revolution to the nadir, and a kind Providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest of men, the Earl of Glencairn. That he was personally unknown to any one of influence in Edinburgh, save Dugald Stewart, and that he took letters of introduction to no one, is perfectly true. Pride had something to do in this. He had begun to feel that a warm dinner and a kind word were to be his chief portion in Kyle; and the silence of one, and the coldness of another, stung him, it is said, deeper than he was willing to allow. He do-

terminated to owe his future fortune, whatever it might be, to no one around; he turned his face to Arthur's Seat, and sung with much buoyancy of heart, as he went, a soothing snatch of an old ballad:—

"As I came in by Glenap,
I met with an aged woman,
She bade me cheer up my heart,
For the best of my days was coming."

PART II.—EDINBURGH

THE first appearance of Burns in Edinburgh was humble enough. The money, reserved to waft him to the West Indies, had been laid out on clothes for this new expedition, or on the family at Mossiel; and, having little in his pocket, he found his way to his friend Richmond, a writer's apprentice, and accepted the offer of a share of his room and bed, in the house of a Mrs. Carfrae, Baxter's-close, Lawnmarket. Though he had taken a stride from the furrowed field into the land of poetry, and abandoned the plough for the harp, he seemed for some days to feel, as in earlier life, unfitted with an aim, and wandered about, looking down from Arthur's Seat, surveying the palace, gazing at the castle, or contemplating the windows of the booksellers' shops, where he saw all works, save the Poems of the Ayr-shire Ploughman. He found his way to the lowly grave of Fergusson, and, kneeling down, kissed the sod: he sought out the house of Allan Ramsay, and, on entering it, took off his hat; and, when he was afterwards introduced to Creech, the bibliopole remembered that he had before heard him inquiring if this had been the shop of the author of "The Gentle Shepherd." In one of these excursions he happened to meet with an Ayr-shire friend, Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield; others say Mr. Dalzell—and some say both—by whom he was introduced to James Earl of Glencairn, who took him by the hand, and with small persuasion prevailed on Creech to become the publisher of the contemplated edition, on terms favourable to Burns. The Poet stipulated to receive one hundred pounds for the copyright of one edition, with the profits of the subscription copies. A prospectus was drawn out, a vast number printed and circulated over the island, and subscriptions came pouring in with a rapidity unknown in the history of Scottish genius.

It is honourable to the patricians of the north that they welcomed the Poet with much cordiality, and subscribed largely; it is honourable to the stately literati of Edinburgh that they not only received their rustic brother gladly into their ranks, but spoke everywhere of his fine genius with undissembled rapture, and introduced him wherever introductions were beneficial: but it is still more honourable to the

husbandmen, the shepherds, and the mechanics of Scotland, that, though wages were small, and money scarce, they subscribed for copies in fifties and in hundreds, and thus extended the patronage always the most welcome, since it implies admiration. Of the noblemen, the most active was the Earl of Glencairn: through his influence the association called the Caledonian Hunt, consisting of the chiefs of the northern aristocracy, consented to accept the dedication of the new edition, and to subscribe individually for copies: the gentlemen, too, of the west, proud that their district, long unproductive in high genius, had ceased to be barren, vied with each other in promoting the interest of the Bard of Kyle; while Blair, Robertson, Blacklock, Smith, Fergusson, Stewart, Mackenzie, Tytler, and Lords Craig and Monboddo—all men distinguished in the world of letters, lent their still more effectual aid; nay, some of them carried the subscription-lists in their pockets, and obtained names through all their wide range of acquaintance.

Burns arrived in Edinburgh at the close of November, 1786; and before, as he poetically said, the cry of the cuckoo was heard, no less than two thousand eight hundred and odd copies were subscribed for by fifteen hundred and odd subscribers. His genius was already felt by high and low—lettered and unlettered. The Caledonian Hunt took one hundred copies; Creech took five hundred; the Earl of Eglinton, forty-two; the Duchess of Gordon, twenty-one; the Earl of Glencairn and his Countess, twenty-four; the Scots College at Valladolid, the Scots College at Douay, the Scots College at Paris, the Scots Benedictine Monastery at Ratisbon, severally took copies; Campbell, of Clathick, subscribed for twelve; Douglas, of Cavers, for eight; Dalrymple, of Orangefield, for ten; Dunlop, of Dunlop, for six; Sir William Forbes, of Pittligo, for eight; Lord Graham, for twelve; Gray, of Garterraig, for six; Sir James Hunter Blair, for eight; Hamilton, of Argyle-square, Edinburgh, for eight. Subscriptions for four copies are very numerous: one-half, however of the list, is composed of humble names; nor should the weavers of the west be forgotten. The sons of the shuttle went not more willingly from Kilmarnock to Mauchline Holy Fair, than they poured in their names for their Poet's works.

Of the manners and appearance of Burns in Edinburgh much has been written and said; every step which he took to the right or to the left has been noted; the company which he kept has afforded matter for philosophic speculation, and his sayings and doings have found a place in the memoranda of the learned, and in the memories of the polite. Even when weighed in the balance of acquired taste and artificial manners, the Poet was scarcely found wanting; he was come of a class who think strongly,

speak freely, and act as they think. The natural good manners, which belong to genius, were his; but, accustomed to hold argument with his rustic compeers, and to vanquish them more by rough vigour, than by delicate persuasion, he had some difficulty in schooling down his impetuous spirit, into the charmed circle of conventional politeness. That he sometimes observed and sometimes neglected this, is natural enough: the fervid impatience of his temper hurried him into the van, at times when his post was in the rear. He had too little tolerance for the stately weak and the learnedly dull: and, holding the patent of his own honours immediately from God, he scarcely could be brought to pay homage to honours arising from humbler sources

But if he refused to be tame in the society of the titled and the learned, he was another being in the company of the fair and the lovely. His poetry at first sprang from love; and, though ambition now claimed its share, the softness and amenity of the purer passion triumphed, and with the lovely he was all pathos and persuasion, gaiety and grace. His look changed, his eye beamed milder, all that was stern or contradictory in his nature vanished when he heard the rustle of approaching silks: charmed himself by beauty, he charmed beauty in his turn. In large companies, the loveliness of the north formed a circle round where he sat; and, with the feathers of duchesses and ladies of high degree fanning his brow, he was all gentleness and attention. The Duchess of Gordon said that Burns, in his address to ladies, was extremely deferential, and always with a turn to the pathetic or the humorous, which won their attention: and added, with much *naïveté*, that she never met with a man whose conversation carried her so completely off her feet. He who was often intractable and fierce, in the presence of man, grew soft and submissive in the company of woman: this was neither unobserved nor unrewarded. When, in his later days, many men looked on the setting of the star of Burns with unconcern or coldness, the fair and the lovely neither slackened in their admiration nor their friendship.

[Dugald Stewart has given us the following account of the manners, character, and conduct of Burns at this period:—"The first time I saw Robert Burns was on the 23d of October, 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayr-shire, together with our common friend Mr. John Mackenzie, surgeon, in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. I am enabled to mention the date particularly, by some verses which Burns wrote after he returned home, and in which the day of our meeting is recorded. I cannot positively say, at this distance of time, whether, at the period of our first acquaintance, the Kilmarnock edition of his poems had been just published, or

was yet in the press. I suspect that the latter was the case, as I have still in my possession copies, in his own hand-writing, of some of his favourite performances; particularly of his verses 'On turning up a Mouse with his Plough,' 'On the Mountain Daisy,' and 'The Lament.' On my return to Edinburgh, I shewed the volume, and mentioned what I knew of the author's history to several of my friends, and, among others, to Mr. Henry Mackenzie, who first recommended him to public notice, in the ninety-seventh number of 'The Lounger.' At this time Burns's prospects in life were so extremely gloomy that he had seriously formed a plan of going out to Jamaica in a very humble situation—not, however, without lamenting that his want of patronage should force him to think of a project so repugnant to his feelings, when his ambition aimed at no higher an object than the station of an exciseman or gauger in his own country. He came," says the Professor, "to Edinburgh early in the winter: the attentions which he received during his stay in town, from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance, which had struck me so forcibly, when I first saw him in the country: nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station—plain and unpretending, with sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right, he always wore boots; and, when on more than usual ceremony, buck-skin breeches. His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference, on subjects, where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness, or servility, rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company: more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

" In the course of the spring (1787), he called on me once or twice, at my request, early in the

morning, and walked with me to Braid Hills, in the neighbourhood of the town, where he charmed me still more by his private conversation, than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect he once told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and worth which they contained. In his political principles he was then a Jacobite; which was, perhaps, owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of Lord Mareschall. Indeed he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in some convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the winter of 1786-7; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversations turned chiefly on his literary projects, or his private affairs. I do not recollect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me that you had ever seen Burns.* If you have, it is superfluous for me to add that the idea his conversation conveyed of the powers of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents, and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns' mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation, I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities. Among the subjects on which he was accustomed to dwell, the characters of the individuals with whom he happened to meet was plainly a favourite one. The remarks he made on them were always shrewd and pointed, though frequently inclining too much to sarcasm. His praise of those he loved was sometimes indiscriminate and extravagant; but this, I suspect, proceeded rather from the caprice and humour of the moment than from the effects of attachment in blinding his judgment. His wit was ready, and always impressed with the marks of a vigorous understanding; but to my taste, not often pleasing or happy.

"Notwithstanding various reports I heard, during the preceding winter, of Burns' predilection for convivial, and not very select, society,

I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety, from all of him that ever fell under my own observation. He told me, indeed, himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him of any merit in his temperance. I was, however, somewhat alarmed about the effect of his now comparatively sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me the first night he spent in my house, after his winter's campaign in town, that he had been much disturbed when in bed by a palpitation at his heart, which, he said, was a complaint to which he had of late become subject."

The remainder of the learned Professor's communication to Dr. Currie is too valuable to be omitted here. "In the summer, 1787, I passed some weeks in Ayr-shire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think that he made a pretty long excursion that season to the Highlands, and that he also visited, what Beatty calls, the Arcaean ground of the Tiviot, and the Tweed. In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a Mason-Lodge in Mauchline, where Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and everything he said was happily conceived, and forcibly, as well as fluently, expressed. If I am not mistaken, he told me that, in that village, before going to Edinburgh, he had belonged to a small club of such of the inhabitants as had a taste for books, when they used to converse and debate on any interesting questions that occurred to them in the course of their reading. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution.

"I must not omit to mention, what I have always considered as characteristic in a high degree of true genius, the extreme facility and good-nature of his taste in judging of the compositions of others, where there was any real ground for praise. I repeated to him many passages of English poetry with which he was unacquainted, and have more than once witnessed the tears of admiration and rapture with which he heard them. The collection of songs by Dr. Aiken, which I first put into his hands, he read with unmixed delight, notwithstanding his former efforts in that very difficult species of writing; and I have little doubt that it had some effect in polishing his subsequent compositions.

"In judging of prose, I do not think his taste was equally sound. I once read to him a passage or two in Franklin's Works which I thought very happily executed, upon the model of Addison; but he did not appear to relish or to perceive the beauty which they derived from their exquisite simplicity, and spoke of them with indifference, when compared with the point, and antithesis, and quaintness of Junius.

[* Dr. Currie had seen and conversed with Burns.]

The influence of this taste is very perceptible in his own prose compositions, although their great and various excellencies render some of them scarcely less objects of wonder than his poetical performances. The late Dr. Robertson used to say that, considering his education, the former seemed to him the more extraordinary of the two.

"His memory was uncommonly retentive, at least for poetry, of which he recited to me frequently long compositions with the most minute accuracy. They were chiefly ballads, and other pieces in our Scottish dialect; great part of them (he told me) he had learned in his childhood, from his mother, who delighted in such recitations, and whose poetical taste, rude as it probably was, gave, it is presumable, the first direction to her son's genius.

"Of the more polished verses which accidentally fell into his hands in his early years, he mentioned particularly the commendatory poems, by different authors, prefixed to 'Hervey's Meditations';—a book which has always had a very wide circulation among such of the country-people of Scotland as affect to unite some degree of taste with their religious studies. And these poems (although they are certainly below mediocrity) he continued to read with a degree of rapture beyond expression. He took notice of this fact himself, as a proof how much the taste is liable to be influenced by accidental circumstances.

"His father appeared to me, from the account he gave of him, to have been a respectable and worthy character, possessed of a mind superior to what might have been expected from his station in life. He ascribed much of his own principles and feelings to the early impressions he had received from his instructions and example. I recollect that he once applied to *him* (and he added that the passage was a literal statement of fact) the two last lines of the following passage in the 'Minstrel,' the whole of which he repeated with great enthusiasm:—

"Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,
When fate, relenting, lets the flower revive;
Shall nature's voice, to man alone unjust,
Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?
Is it for this fair virtue oft must strive
With disappointment, penury, and pain?
No! Heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive;
And man's majestic beauty bloom again,
Bright through th' eternal year of love's triumphant reign."

"With respect to Burns' early education I cannot say anything with certainty. He always spoke with respect and gratitude of the schoolmaster who had taught him to read English; and who, finding in his scholar a more than ordinary ardour for knowledge, had been at pains to instruct him in the grammatical principles of the language. He began the study of Latin, but dropped it before he had finished the

verbs. I have sometimes heard him quote a few Latin words, such as *omnia vincit amor*, &c., but they seemed to be such as he had caught from conversation, and which he repeated by rote. I think he had a project, after he came to Edinburgh, of prosecuting the study under his intimate friend, the late Mr. Nicol, one of the masters of the grammar-school here; but I do not know that he ever proceeded so far as to make the attempt. He certainly possessed a smattering of French; and, if he had an affection in anything, it was in introducing occasionally a word or phrase from that language. It is possible that his knowledge in this respect might be more extensive than I suppose it to be; but this you can learn from his more intimate acquaintance. It would be worth while to enquire whether he was able to read the French authors with such facility as to receive from them any improvement to his taste. For my own part I doubt it much, nor would I believe it but on very strong and pointed evidence. If my memory does not fail me, he was well-instructed in arithmetic, and knew something of practical geometry, particularly of surveying. All his other attainments were entirely his own. The last time I saw him was during the winter, 1789-90, when he passed an evening with me at Drumseugh, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where I was then living. My friend Mr. Alison was the only other person in company. I never saw him more agreeable nor interesting."]

Nor is the testimony of Professor Walker less decided; for him, as well as for Burns, Doon had poured all her floods—the rising sun had glinted gloriously over Galston Moors, and snow had lain untrodden on the hills of Ochiltree: he was a native of Kyle, and interested in all that added to its renown. "In conversation Burns was powerful: his conceptions and expressions were of corresponding vigour, and on all subjects were as remote as possible from common-place. Though somewhat authoritative, it was in a way that gave little offence, and was readily imputed to his inexperience in those modes of smoothing dissent, and softening assertion, which are important characteristics of polished manners. After breakfast, I requested him to communicate some of his unpublished pieces, and he recited his farewell song to the Banks of Ayr, introducing it with a description of the circumstances in which it was composed, more striking than the poem itself. He had left Dr. Laurie's family, and on his way home had to cross a wide stretch of solitary moor. His mind was strongly affected by parting for ever with a scene where he had tasted so much elegant and social pleasure. The aspect of nature harmonized with his feelings—it was a lowering and heavy evening; the wind was up, and whistled through the rushes and long spear-grass, which bent before it; the clouds were

driven across the sky, and cold pelting showers, at intervals, added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind. His recitation was plain, slow, articulate, and forcible, but without any eloquence of art. He did not always lay the emphasis with propriety, nor did he humour the sentiment by the variations of his voice."

As Heron—a man who rose by the force of his talents, and fell by the keenness of his passions—is the least favourable to the Poet of all his biographers, we may quote him without fear:—"The conversation of Burns was, in comparison with the formal and exterior circumstances of his education, perhaps even more wonderful than his poetry. He affected no soft airs or graceful motions of politeness, which might have ill accorded with the rustic plainness of his native manners. Conscious superiority of mind taught him to associate with the great, the learned, and the gay, without being over-awed into any such bashfulness, as might have made him confused in thought, or hesitating in elocution. In conversation, he displayed a sort of intuitive quickness and rectitude of judgment upon every subject that arose; the sensibility of his heart and the vivacity of his fancy, gave a rich colouring to whatever reasoning he was disposed to advance, and his language in conversation was not at all less happy than his writings; for these reasons he did not fail to please immediately after having been first seen. I remember that the late Dr. Robertson once observed to me, that he had scarcely ever met with any man whose conversation discovered greater vigour and activity of mind than that of Burns."

[The recollections of Mr. John Richmond, writer in Mauchline, respecting Burns' arrival, and the earlier period of his residence, in Edinburgh, are curious. Mr. Richmond, who had been brought up in the office of a country writer, or attorney, and was now perfecting his studies in that of a metropolitan practitioner, occupied a room in the Lawnmarket, at the rent of three shillings a-week. His circumstances, as a youth just entering the world, made him willing to share his apartment and bed with any agreeable companion, who might be disposed to take part in the expense. These terms suited his old Mauchline acquaintance, Burns, who accordingly lived with him, from his arrival in November till his leaving town in May, on his southern excursion. Mr. Richmond mentions that the poet was so knocked up, by his walk from Mauchline to Edinburgh, that he could not leave his room for the next two days. During the whole time of his residence there, his habits were temperate and regular. Much of his time was necessarily occupied in preparing his poems for the press—a task in which, as far as transcription was concerned, Mr. Richmond aided him, when not engaged in his own office duties. Burns, though frequently invited out into com-

pany, usually returned at good hours, and went soberly to bed, where he would prevail upon his companion, by little bribes, to read to him till he fell asleep. Mr. Lockhart draws an unfavourable inference from his afterwards removing to the house of his friend Nicol: but for this removal Mr. Richmond supplies a reason which exculpates the bard. During Burns' absence in the south and at Mauchline, Mr. Richmond took in another fellow-lodger; so that, when the poet came back, and applied for re-admission to Mrs. Carfrae's humble menage, he found his place filled up, and was compelled to go elsewhere.

The exterior of Burns, for some time after his arrival in Edinburgh, was little superior to that of his rustic compeers. "What a clod-hopper!" was the descriptive exclamation of a lady to whom he was abruptly pointed out one day in the Lawnmarket. In the course of a few weeks, he got into comparatively fashionable attire—a blue coat with metal buttons, a yellow and blue striped vest (being the livery of Mr. Fox), a pair of buckskins, so tight that he seemed to have grown into them, and top-boots, meeting the buckskins under the knee. His neckcloth, of white cambric, was neatly arranged, and his whole appearance was clean and respectable, though the taste in which he was dressed was still obviously a rustic taste.

Though his habits during the winter of 1786-7 were upon the whole good, he was not altogether exempt from the bacchanalianism which at this period reigned in Edinburgh. Mr. William Nicol of the High School, and Mr. John Gray, City-clerk, were among his most intimate convivial friends. Nicol lived in the top of a house over what is called *Buccleuch Pend*, in the lowest floor of which there was a tavern, kept by a certain Lucky Pringle, having a back entry from the *pend*, through which visitors could be admitted, unwotted of by a censorious world. There Burns was much with Nicol, both before and after his taking up his abode in that gentleman's house. He also attended pretty frequently the meetings of the *Crochallan Fencibles*, at their howff in the Anchor Close; and of Johnnie Dowie's tavern, in Libberton's Wynd, he was also a frequent visitor. Mr. Alexander Cunningham, jeweller, and Mr. Robert Cleghorn, farmer at Saughton Mills, may be said to complete the list of Burns's convivial acquaintance in Edinburgh. The intimacy he formed with Mr. Robert Ainslie, then a young writer's apprentice, appears to have been of a different character.

Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield, and the Hon. Henry Erskine, may be mentioned as individuals who exerted themselves in behalf of Burns, immediately after his arrival in Edinburgh. Dr. Adam Fergusson, author of the *History of the Roman Republic*, may also be added to Dr. Currie's list of his literary and

philosophical patrons. At the house of the latter gentleman, Sir Walter Scott met with Burns, of whom he has given his recollections in the following interesting letter to Mr. Lockhart:—

"As for Burns, I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets whom he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Fergusson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sate silent, looked, and listened. The only thing I remember, which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side,—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

"Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain—
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptized in tears."

"Burns seemed much affected by the print, or, rather, the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered, that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure.

"His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture; but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school; i. e. none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their

drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet, at the same time, with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember, on this occasion, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Fergusson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was, doubtless, national predilection in his estimate.

"This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak in *malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information, more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this.—I do not know any thing I can add to these recollections of forty years since."

The more generous looked with wonder on the bold Peasant, who had claimed and taken place with the foremost, and who seemed to have endowments of every kind equal to his ambition; while other geniuses, raised by the artificial heat of colleges and schools, glanced with scorn or envy on one who had sprung into fame, through the genial warmth of nature. Henry Mackenzie was not of the latter; as soon as he read the poems of Burns, he perceived that the right inspiration was in them, and recommended them and their author to public notice, in a paper in "The Lounger," written with feeling and truth. His poems discover a tone of feeling, a power and energy of expression, particularly and strongly charac-

teristic of the mind and voice of a poet. The critic perceives, too, passages solemn and sublime, touched, and that not slightly, with a rapt and inspired melancholy: together with sentiments tender, and moral, and elegiac. Of "The Daisy," he says, "I have seldom met with an image more truly pastoral than that of the lark in the second stanza. Such strokes as these mark the pencil of the poet, which delineates nature with the precision of intimacy, yet with the delicate colouring of beauty and of taste. Burns possesses the spirit as well as the fancy of a poet; that honest pride and independence of soul, which are sometimes the muses' only dower, break forth on every occasion in his works." The criticism struck the true note of his peculiar genius, and, with something like prescience, claimed the honours of "National Poet," which have since been so strongly conceded."

This was regarded by some as not a little rash, on the part of Mackenzie; the rustic harp of Scotland had not been for centuries swept by a hand so forcible and free; the language was that of humble life, the scenes were the clay-cottage, the dusty barn, and the stubble-field, and the characters the cloutery children of the penfold and the plough. There was nothing in the new prodigy which could be called classic, little which those who looked through the vista of a college reckoned poetical; and his verses were deemed rather the effusions of a random rhymist than a true poet. Speaking from his heart, Mackenzie spoke right; and, in claiming for Burns the honours due to the elect in song, he did a good deed for genius. The Poet now stood at the head of northern song, and with historians, and philosophers, and critics applauding, he looked upon himself as "owned" by the best judges of his country.

The well-timed kindness of Mackenzie was never forgotten by Burns; from this time he prized the "Man of Feeling" as a book next in worth to the Bible; he never mentioned the author save in terms of affectionate admiration, and ranked him among his benefactors:—

Mackenzie, Stewart, sic a brace,
As Rome ne'er saw."

He felt his high, and, to his fancy, dangerous elevation:—"You are afraid," he thus writes, January 15, 1787, to Mrs. Dunlop, "I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned

and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you, I tremble for the consequences. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and, however a friend, or the world, may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it.—But

"When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,"

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward, with rueful resolve, to the hastening time, when the blow of calumny should dash it to the ground with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph."

The Poet speaks, about the same time, in a similar strain to the Rev. Mr. Laurie, who, it seems had warned him to beware of vanity, and of prosperity's spiced cup. A tone of despondency, too, is visible in his letters to Dr. Moore:—"Not many months ago," he observes, "I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast anything higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment; but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this, of late, I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see, with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities."

Burns indicates the station to which he must soon descend, still more plainly to another correspondent. The Earl of Buchan had advised him to visit the battle-fields of Caledonia, and, firing his fancy with deeds wrought by heroes, pour their deathless names in song. When the prophet retired to meditate in the desert, he was miraculously fed by ravens; but the peer forgot to say how the poet was to be fed when musing on the fields of Stirling, Falkirk, and Bannockburn. That Heaven would send food while he produced song seems not to have entered into his mind: for he says—"My Lord—in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking, phantom strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic words:—'I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes, merely to give you pain. I have given

you line upon line, and precept upon precept ; and while I was chalking out to you the straight way to wealth and character, with audacious effrontery you have zig-zagged across the path, confounding me to my face. You know the consequences. Now that your dear-loved Scotia puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these will-o'-the-wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin ? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from the veriest poverty—still it is half a step from it. You know how you feel at the iron-gripe of ruthless oppression—you know how you bear the galling sneer of contumelious greatness. I hold you out the conveniences, the comforts of life, independence, and character, on the one hand ; I tender you servility, dependence, and wretchedness, on the other. I will not insult your understanding by bidding you make a choice.”

He intimated his intention of returning to the plough still more publicly, when, in the new edition of his works, April, 1787, he thus addressed the noblemen and gentlemen of Scotland :—“The poetic genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough—and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my natal soil, in my native tongue. I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired.—She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honoured protection. I do not approach you, my lords and gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours ; that path is so hackneyed, by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours. I was bred to the plough, and am independent.” This bold language sounded strangely in noble ears. It was set down by some as approaching to arrogance—was regarded by others as the cant of independence ; or considered by a few as rude and vulgar, and remembered, when the Poet looked for some better acknowledgment of his genius than a six-shilling subscription, or an invitation to dine. Silence, perhaps, would have been best ; but if it were necessary to speak, I cannot see that he could have spoken better.

The Poet spent the winter and spring of 1787, in Edinburgh, much after his own heart ; he loved company, and was not unwilling to shew that nature sometimes bestowed gifts, against which rank and education could scarcely make good their station. This was, perhaps, the unwise course he could have pursued : a man with ten thousand a year will always be considered, by the world around, superior to a man whose wealth lies in his genius ; the dullest can

estimate what landed property is worth, but who can say what is the annual value of an estate which lies in the imagination ? In fame there was no rivalry ; and in station, what hope had a poet with the earth of his last turned furrow still red on his shoon, to rival the Montgomeries, the Hamiltons, and the Gordons, with counties for estates, and the traditional éclat of a thousand years accompanying them ? In the sight of the great and the far-descended, he was still a farmer, for whom the Grass-market was the proper scene of action, and the husbandmen of the land the proper companions ; his company was sought, not from a sense that genius had raised him to an equality with lords and earls, but from a wish to see how this wild man of the west would behave himself, in the presence of ladies, plumed and jewelled, and lords, clothed in all the terrors of their wealth and titles.

The beautiful Duchess of Gordon was, in those days, at the head of fashion in Edinburgh ; a wit herself, with some taste for music and poetry ; she sought the acquaintance of Burns, and invited him to her parties. Lord Monboddo, equally accomplished and whimsical, gave parties, after what he called the classic fashion ; he desired to revive the splendid suppers of the ancients, and placed on his tables the choicest wines, in decanters of a Grecian pattern, adorned with wreaths of flowers ; painting lent its attraction as well as music, while odours of all kinds were diffused from visible or invisible sources. Into scenes of this kind, and into company coldly polite and sensitively ceremonious, the brawny Bard of Doon, equally rash of speech and unceremonious in conduct, precipitated himself ; but rich wines and lovely women, like the touch of the goddess which rendered Ulysses acceptable in the sight of a princess, brightened up the looks of the Poet, and inspired his tongue with that conquering eloquence which pleased fastidious ladies. In fine company, where it was imagined he would have failed, he triumphed. The fame of all these doings flew into Ayrshire.—“There is a great rumour here,” said one of his friends, “concerning your intimacy with the Duchess of Gordon ; I am really told that

“Cards to invite fly by thousands each night ;”

and if you had one, I suppose there would be also ‘bribes for your old secretary.’ It seems that you are resolved to make hay while the sun shines, a good maxim to thrive by ; you seemed to despise it while in this country, but probably some philosopher in Edinburgh has taught you better sense.”

Of his own feelings on these occasions the Poet has said but little : Lord Monboddo’s table had other attractions than wine called Falernian, and dishes like those praised in

Latin verse. The beauty of his daughter is celebrated by Burns both in prose and poetry—

"Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
Heav'n's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
And own his work indeed divine!"

"I enclose you," he says to his friend Chalmers, "two poems which I have carded and spun since I passed Glenbuck. One blank in the Address to Edinburgh, 'fair B—' is the heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter of Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been any thing nearly like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed since Milton's Eve, on the first day of her existence."

Those who were afraid that amid feasting and flattery—the smiles of ladies and the applauding nods of their lords—Burns would forget himself, and allow the mercury of vanity to rise too high within him, indulged in idle fears. When he dined or supped with the magnates of the land, he never wanted a monitor to warn him of the humility of his condition. When the company arose in the gilded and illuminated rooms, some of the fair guests—perhaps

"Her grace,
Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,
And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,"

took the hesitating arm of the Bard; went smiling to her coach, waved a graceful good-night with her jewelled hand, and, departing to her mansion, left him in the middle of the street to grope his way through the dingy alleys of the "gude town" to his obscure lodging, with his share of a deal table, a sanded floor, and a chaff bed, at eighteen pence a week. That his eyes were partly open to this, we know; but he did not perceive that these invitations arose from a wish to relieve the *ennui* of a supper-table, where the guests were all too well-bred to utter any thing strikingly original or boldly witty. Had Burns beheld the matter in this light, he would have sprung up like Wat Tinnin, when touched with the elfin bodkin; and, overturning silver dishes, garlanded decanters, and shoving opposing ladies and staring lords aside, made his way to the plough-tail, and recommenced turning the furrows upon his cold and ungenial farm of Moss-giel.—"I have formed many intimacies and friendships here," he observes, in a letter to Dr. Moore; "but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights

of genius and literature." In these words he expressed his fears: they were prophetic.

While his volume was passing through the press, he added "The Brigs of Ayr," the "Address to Edinburgh," and one or two songs and small pieces. The first poem, "The Brigs of Ayr," seems to have been written for the two fold purpose of giving a picture of old times and new, and honouring in rhyme those who befriended him on the banks of Doon; and, like Ballantyne, to whom it is inscribed, had

"Handed the rustic stranger up to fame."

There were two poems which some of his friends begged him to exclude from his new volume. On the score of delicacy, they requested the omission of "The Louse;" and on that of loyalty and propriety, "The Dream." He defended the former, because of the moral with which the poem concludes, and maintained the propriety of the latter with such wit and indiscretion that cautious divines and cool professors shrugged their shoulders, and talked of the folly of the sons of song. Mrs. Dunlop seems to have taken the matter much to heart.—"Your criticisms, madam," says the Poet, nettled a little by her remonstrance, "I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel; I set as little by princes, lords, clergy, and critics, as all those respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by-and-bye—illiberal abuse, and, perhaps, contemptuous neglect."

In this sarcastic Dream, there was much to amuse and more to incense a king, who endured advice as little as he did contradiction. The life of George the Third was pure and blameless; but the young princes of his house had already commenced their gay and extravagant courses. The song of the Bard is prophetic of the two elder ones:—

"For you, young Potentate o' Wales,
I tell your Highness fairly,
Down pleasure's stream, wi' swelling sails,
I'm tauld ye're driving rarely;
But some day ye may gnaw your nails,
An' curse your folly sairly,
That e'er ye brak' Diana's pales,
Or rattl'd dice wi' Charlie."

"For you, Right Rev'rend Osnourg,
Nane sets the lawn-sleeve sweeter,
Altho' a ribbon at your lug,
Wad been a dress completer:
As ye disown yon paughty dog
That bears the keys o' Peter,
Then swi'k! I an' get a wife to hug,
Or, trouth! ye'll stain the mitre."

The "Address to Edinburgh" contains some noble verses. I have heard the description of the castle praised by one, whose genius all but exempted him from error:—

"There, watching high the least alarms,
Thy rough, rude fortress gleams afar,
Like some bold vet'ran, grey in arms,
And mark'd with many a seamy scar:
The pond'rous wall and masonry bar,
Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock,
Have oft withstood assailing War,
And oft repell'd th' invader's shock."

When Burns told Mrs. Dunlop that he was determined to flatter no created being, she might have smiled; for in his "Earnest Cry and Prayer," he scattered praise as profusely as ever he scattered corn over his new-turned furrows. He, who could see Demosthenes and Cicero in half-a-dozen northern members of Parliament, was inclined to flatter: Dempster, Cunningham, the Campbells,—

"And ane, a chap that's damn'd auld-farran,
Dundas his name,"

were respectable debaters, but not eloquent. "Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie," came nearer to the comparison, and almost reconciles us to the lavish waste of honours on the others.

Burns' taste, which in all things resembled his genius, was almost always correct: he depended on its accuracy, and, as he used no words at random, was unwilling to alter aught. In the "Cotter's Saturday Night" he called Wallace the "unhappy," in allusion to his fate; he hesitated now to change the word to "undaunted," in compliance with the criticism of Mrs. Dunlop.—"Your friendly advice"—he says to that lady, "I will not give it the cold name of criticism, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here: but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures; his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly."

During the spring, he sat to Alexander Nasmyth for his portrait; it was engraved by Beugo, whose boast it was that he had added to the merit of the likeness by inducing Burns to give him a sitting or two while he touched up the plate. He also allowed his profile to be taken in small: the brow is low, the hair hangs over it, and there is a short queue behind. The portrait by Nasmyth is the best, though wanting a little in massive vigour and the look of inspiration. He sat to whoever desired him, nor seemed to be aware that genius went to such works as well as to the manufacture of rhyme. He took pleasure in presenting proof impressions of this portrait to his friends: sometimes the gift was accompanied by verse, and it has been remarked that he imagined he looked very well on paper, and expected some notice to be taken of his face as well as of his poetry.

Of his verse, indeed, the notice was not always taken that he desired. On the death of Dundas of Arniston, Lord President of the Court of Session, he wrote a "Lamentation," forty lines in length. There are vigorous passages; the Poet affects an excess of grief; he complains to the hills, the plains, and the tempests, of the too early removal of one who redressed wrongs, restrained violence, defeated fraud, and protected innocence. He copied the poem into a volume now before me, and presented it to Dr. Geddes, with the following note, describing the success of his "Lamentation."—"The foregoing poem has some tolerable lines in it, but the incurable wound of my pride will not suffer me to correct or even to peruse it. I sent a copy of it, with my best prose letter, to the son of the great man, the theme of the piece, by the hands, too, of one of the noblest men in God's world, Alex. Wood, surgeon; when, behold! his solicitorship took no more notice of my poem or me than I had been a strolling fiddler, who had made free with his lady's name, over the head of a silly new reel! Did he think I looked for any dirty gratuity?"

Some of the anecdotes related of the Poet and his proof-sheets are amusing enough. When he had made up his mind to retain a line in the words of its original inspiration—such as "When I look back on prospects drear,"—he stated his reasons briefly for refusing to make any change, and then sat, like his own heroine, "deaf as Ailsa Craig" to all persuasion or remonstrance. Nor did he lose his serenity of mind, though the way in which he unconsciously, perhaps, crumpled up the sheet in his hand, till he almost made it illegible, shewed what was passing within him. It was on one of these occasions that a clergyman, stung with the irreverent way that Burns had handled the cloth, in some of his earlier pieces, hazarded some stern remarks on the "Holy Fair;" not, he said, but that the poem was a clever picture, he only wished to shew that it was not constructed according to the true rules of composition. The reverend censor did not acquit himself well in his perilous undertaking: the eye of the Poet began to lighten, and his lips to give a sort of twitching announcement that something sarcastic was coming. All present looked towards him; he spoke as they expected, saying, "No, by heaven! I'll not touch him—"

"Dulness is sacred in a sound divine."

—"I'll find you as apt a quotation as that," said the aggressor, "and from a poet whom I love more—"

"Corbies and Clergy are a shot right kittle."

Burns laughed, held out his hand, saying, "Then we are friends again."

He did not always come off so happily : on another occasion, Cromek tells us that, at a breakfast, where a number of the literati were present, a critic, one of those fond of seeming very acute and wise, undertook to prove that Gray's *Elegy* in a country Church-yard, a poem of which Burns was enthusiastically fond, violated the essential rules of verse, and transgressed against true science, to which he held true poetry to be amenable. He failed, however, in explaining the nature of his scientific gauge, and he also failed in quoting the lines correctly, which he proposed to censure ; upon which Burns exclaimed with great vehemence, "Sir, I now perceive a man may be an excellent judge of poetry by square and rule, and, after all, be a d——d blockhead."

One of those critical scenes is well described by Professor Walker, who happened to be present ; it occurred at the table of Dr. Blair, who was fond of hearing the Poet read his own verses.—"The aversion of Burns," he observes, "to adopt alterations which were proposed to him, after having fully satisfied his own taste, is apparent from his letters. In one passage, he says that he never accepted any of the corrections of the Edinburgh Literati, except in the instance of a single word. If his admirers should be desirous to know this 'single word,' I am able to gratify them, as I happened to be present when the criticism was made. It was at the table of a gentleman of literary celebrity (Dr. Blair), who observed, that in two lines of the 'Holy Fair,' beginning—

'For Moodie speels the holy door,
Wi' tidings of salvation.'

The last word, from his description of the preacher, ought to be *damnation*. This change, both embittering the satire, and introducing a word to which Burns had no dislike, met with his instant enthusiastic approbation. 'Excellent!' he exclaimed with great warmth, 'the alteration shall be made, and I hope you will allow me to say, in a note, from whose suggestion it proceeds ;' a request which the critic with great good humour, but with equal decision, refused." The Poet had not yet discovered what was due to clerical decorum. I must copy another of Professor Walker's pictures of the Poet and the Edinburgh Literati:—

"The day after my introduction to Burns," says the Professor, "I supped in company with him at Dr. Blair's. The other guests were very few ; and, as each had been invited chiefly to have an opportunity of meeting with the Poet, the Doctor endeavoured to draw him out, and make him the central figure of the groupe. Though he, therefore, furnished the greatest proportion of the conversation, he did no more than what he saw was evidently expected. Men of genius have often been taxed with a proneness to commit blunders in company, from

that ignorance or negligence of the laws of conversation, which must be imputed to the absorption of their thoughts on a favourite subject, or to the want of that daily practice in attending to the petty modes of behaviour, which is incompatible with a studious life. From singularities of this sort, Burns was unusually free : yet, on the present occasion, he made a more awkward slip than any that are reported of the poets or mathematicians, most noted for absence. Being asked from which of the public places of worship he had received the greatest gratification, he named the high church, but gave the preference as a preacher to (the Rev. Robert Walker) the colleague (and most formidable rival) of our worthy entertainer—whose celebrity rested on his pulpit eloquence—in a tone so pointed and decisive as to throw the whole company into the most foolish embarrassment. The Doctor, indeed, with becoming self-command, endeavoured to relieve the rest by cordially seconding the encomium so injudiciously introduced ; but this did not prevent the conversation from labouring under that compulsory effort which was unavoidable, while the thoughts of all were full of the only subject on which it was improper to speak. Of this blunder Burns must instantly have been aware, but he shewed the return of good sense by making no attempt to repair it. His secret mortification was indeed so great that he never mentioned the circumstance until many years after, when he told me that his silence had proceeded from the pain which he felt in recalling it to his memory."

It must be mentioned, to the honour of Blair, that this mortifying blunder had no influence over his well-regulated mind, and that he appears, from his correspondence, to have augmented rather than lessened his kindness for the Poet ; the strong sense of propriety which is visible in all that Blair ever said or wrote preserved him from this : yet he probably thought of the Poet's preference when he first saw the fragment on America, beginning :—

"When Guilford good our pilot stood ;"

and said, "Burns' politics always smell of the smithy." The Bard disapproved of the war waged with America ; the world at large has shared in his feelings, and the sarcasm of the Doctor falls harmless on this little hasty, though not very happy production. It was likely to Blair that Burns glanced when, in reply to the question if the critical literati of Edinburgh had aided him with their opinions,—"The best of these gentlemen," said he, "are like the wife's daughter in the west—they spin the thread of their criticism so fine, that it is fit for neither warp nor waft." He was never at a loss for illustrations drawn from domestic life or rural affairs.

[No one has equalled Lockhart's account of Burns among the literati and lawyers of Edinburgh:—"It needs no effort of imagination to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail, at a single stride, manifested, in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation, a most thorough conviction that, in the society of the most eminent men of his nation, he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble—nay, to tremble visibly—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles, for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and—last, and probably worst of all,—who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies, which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit, in all likelihood, still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had, ere long, no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves.

"The lawyers of Edinburgh, in whose wider circle Burns figured at his outset, with at least as much success as among the professional literati, were a very different race of men from these, they would neither, I take it, have pardoned rudeness, nor been alarmed by wit. But being, in those days, with scarcely an exception, members of the landed aristocracy of the coun-

try, and forming by far the most influential body (as, indeed, they still do) in the society of Scotland, they were, perhaps, as proud a set of men as ever enjoyed the tranquil pleasures of unquestioned superiority. What their haughtiness, as a body, was, may be guessed, when we know that inferior birth was reckoned a fair and legitimate ground for excluding any man from the bar. In one remarkable instance, about this very time, a man of very extraordinary talents and accomplishments was chiefly opposed in a long and painful struggle for admission, and in reality, for no reasons but those I have been alluding to, by gentlemen, who, in the sequel, stood at the very head of the Whig party in Edinburgh; and the same aristocratical prejudice has, within the memory of the present generation, kept more persons of eminent qualifications in the back-ground, for a season, than any English reader would easily believe. To this body belonged nineteen out of twenty of those "patricians," whose stateliness Burns so long remembered, and so bitterly resented. It might, perhaps, have been well for him had stateliness been the worst fault of their manners. Wine-bibbing appears to be in most regions a favourite indulgence with those whose brains and lungs are subjected to the severe exercises of legal study and forensic practice. To this day, more traces of these old habits linger about the inns of courts than in any other sections of London. In Dublin and Edinburgh, the barristers are even now eminently convivial bodies of men; but among the Scotch lawyers of the time of Burns, the principle of jollity was indeed in its "high and palmy state." He partook largely in those tavern scenes of audacious hilarity, which then soothed, as a matter of course, the arid labours of the northern *noblesse de la robe* (so they are well called in *Red Gauntlet*), and of which we are favoured with a specimen in the "Iligh Jinks" chapter of *Guy Mannering*.

The tavern-life is now-a-days nearly extinct every where; but it was then in full vigour in Edinburgh, and there can be no doubt that Burns rapidly familiarized himself with it during his residence. He had, after all, tasted but rarely of such excesses while in Ayr-shire.*]

* [The fact is, those who accuse Burns of drunkenness know nothing about the history of drunkenness in Scotland at all. Let them look at the character of the Baron of Bradwardine in one age, and of High Jinks in another, by Sir Walter Scott, and they will find the epitome of drinking in those ages drawn to the very life. About the beginning of the last century, and for some time previous, drinking, among the nobility and first-rate gentry of Scotland, was carried to a very great height. The late Provost Creech of Edinburgh told many good stories illustrative of that age, and among others was the following:—"There was one Angus-shire laird went to visit a neighbour, whose christian name was George. The visitor was the laird of Balmamoon, commonly called Bonnymoon; he would drink nothing but claret: so his friend, George, made up a great number of bottles of half-brandy and half-claret, knowing that the laird would stick to his number. He did so, and commended the

wine greatly; but sat on with his friend three days and two nights without perceiving it, he being all that time in the highest glee. At the end of the third day Bonnymoon failed, grew pale, and sunk back on his chair. "Come, laird, fill your glass; this will never do." "O,—George,—I can—do—no more—for you." "Then you had better go to bed." "O, no!—I never sleep—from—home. Never—stay from home a—night—never!" So off went the laird with his servant behind him—both on capital horses. The night was dark and stormy, and, in riding over a waste, off went the laird's hat. John galloped after it, and seized it, leaning on a furze bush. "John, this is not my hat at all; go and look for the right one." "There is very little wale o' cockit hats here the night, your honour." "I say, John, this is not my hat. It would hold two heads like mine. I'll be d—d but it has taken the wig away with it." After long groping, John got the wig on another furze bush, and handed it to his

Towards the close of April the subscription volume

"On wings of wind came flying all abroad,"

and was widely and warmly welcomed. All that coterie influence and individual exertion—all that the noblest or the humblest could do, was done to aid in giving it a kind reception; Creech, too, had announced it through the booksellers of the land, and it was soon diffused over the country, over the colonies, and wherever the language was spoken. The literary men of the south seemed even to fly a flight beyond those of the north. Some hesitated not to call him the northern Shakspeare; criticism at that period had not usurped the throne, and assumed the functions of genius; reviews were few in number, and moderate in influence, and followed opinion rather than led it. Had he lived in a later day, with what a triumphant air of superiority would the two leading critical journals have crushed him! They would have agreed in this, though in nothing else, to trample down a spirit which wrote not as they wrote, and felt not as they felt; they would have assumed the air of high philosophy and searching science, and buried him, as he did the Daisy, under the weight of a deep-drawn critical furrow. The Whig of the north would have pounced on his poetical jacobitism; the Tory of the south upon his love of freedom; and both would have tossed him to the meaner hounds of the kennel of criticism, after they had dissected the soul and heart out of him. Much of this these journals tried to do at a later period, when the Poet was low in the dust, and his fame as high as Heaven, and beyond their rancour or their spite.

While Burns lodged with his Mauchline friend, Richmond, he kept good hours and sober company. In the course of the spring he became acquainted with William Nicol, one of the masters of the High-school, who lived in the Buccleugh-road, and found more suitable accommodation under his roof. This has been considered as a symptom that the keeping of good hours was growing irksome. The poverty of the Poet made him live frugally—nay, meanly, when he arrived in Edinburgh; but when money came pouring in, and gentlemen of note called on him, it did not become him to remain in an apartment of which he had but a share. I see little harm in this, or proof of increasing irregularity. Nicol, it is true, was of a quick, fierce temper—loose and wavering in his religious opinions—fond of social company, and now and then indulged in excesses, though

his situation required sobriety. Lockhart, who charges the imputed irregularities of Burns on the example of Nicol, supports his conclusion by the testimony of Heron. But Heron is a doubtful evidence; he was himself not only inclined to gross sensual indulgence, but has been regarded as one not at all solicitous about the truth.—"The enticements of pleasure," says Heron, "too often unman our virtuous resolutions, even while we wear the air of rejecting them with a stern brow. We resist, and resist, and resist; but at last suddenly turn and embrace the enchantress. The bucks of Edinburgh accomplished, in regard to Burns, that in which the boors of Ayr-shire had failed. After residing some months in Edinburgh, he began to estrange himself, not altogether, but in some measure, from graver friends. Too many of his hours were now spent at the tables of persons who delighted to urge conviviality to drunkenness." Heron knew not what resolutions Burns formed, nor how much he resisted: and to push conviviality to intoxication was common in those days at the tables of the gentlemen of the north. The entertainer set down the quantity to be drunk, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and the guests had either to swallow all his wine, or fill the landlord tipsy, steal the key, and escape.

Though Burns had expressed doubts to Lord Buchan on the prudence of a penniless poet visiting the battle-fields, and fine natural scenery of Scotland, and intimated to many of his friends his resolution to return to the plough, he longed to pull broom on the Cowden-knowes, look at the Birks on the Braes of Yarrow, and see whether Flora smiled as sweetly on the Tweed as Crawford had represented. On the third of May he wrote to Dr. Blair—"I leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship which you have shown me." The Doctor answered his farewell at once, and his words weigh those of Heron to the dust.—"Your situation was indeed very singular; and, being brought out all at once from the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy you have stood it so well; and, as far as I have known or heard—though in the midst of many temptations—without reproach to your character and behaviour. You are now, I presume, to retire to a more private walk of life, and I trust you will conduct yourself there with industry, prudence, and honour. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem.

master. "John, this is not my wig; just look at it: this is not my wig at all!"—(he had put it on with the wrong side foremost.) "Ah! gude faith, your honour, if there's little wale o' hats, there's nae wale o' wigs here, this night." They rode on, and on coming to the North Eak, the laird's horse dashed down his head to drink, and off went the laird,

head foremost, into the river, with a prodigious plunge. He soon, however, set up his head. "John, what was that?" "I dinna ken. I thought it had been your honour." "John, I dinna understand this." "Get up, your honour, you'll maybe understand it by and by." HODG.]

In the midst of those employments which your situation will render proper, you will not, I hope, neglect to promote that esteem by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it, as may raise your character still higher. At the same time, be not in too great haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents; for, on any second production you give the world, your fate, as a poet, will very much depend." Burns, it is said, received this letter when about to mount his horse on his Border excursion; he read as far as I have transcribed, then crumpled up the communication, and, thrusting it into his pocket, exclaimed, "Kindly said, Doctor; but a man's first-born book is often like his first-born babe—healthier and stronger than those which follow." In this mood he quitted Edinburgh, after a residence of five months and some odd days.

Burns was accompanied in this tour by Robert Ainslie, a young gentleman of talents and education, whose friendship his genius had procured, and who is still living to enjoy the esteem and some of the applause of the world. The Poet directed his course by Lammermoor—whose hills he pronounced dreary in general, but at times picturesque—through Peebles, where he chanted a stave of the old song of "The Wife of Peebles;" passed Coldstream, where he thought of Monk and his "reformadoe saints," and from Lanton-Edge gazed on the Merse, which he pronounced "glorious."

[Of this tour, Burns kept a journal; it is now before me: the entries are brief, but generally to the point.—"May 6th, 1787. Reach Berrywell; old Mr. Ainslie an uncommon character; his hobbies—agriculture, natural philosophy, and politics. In the first, he is unexceptionably the clearest-headed, best-informed man I ever met with; in the other two, very intelligent: as a man of business he has uncommon merit, and by fairly deserving it, has made a very decent independence. Mrs. Ainslie, an excellent, sensible, cheerful, amiable woman. Miss Ainslie, her person a little *embonpoint*, but handsome, her face, particularly her eyes, full of sweetness and good humour. She unites three qualities rarely to be found together; keen penetration, sly witty observation and remark, and the gentlest, most unaffected, female modesty.—Douglas, a clever, fine, promising young fellow.—The family-meeting with their brother, my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister. The whole family remarkably attached to their menials—Mrs. A. full of

stories of the sagacity and sense of the little girl in the kitchen.—Mr. A. high in the praises of an African, his house servant—all his people old in his service.—Douglas's old nurse came to Berrywell yesterday to remind them of its being his birth-day." Here he met with the author of "The Maid that tends the Goats," of whom he says,—"Mr. Dudgeon—a poet at times, a worthy, remarkable character, natural penetration, a great deal of information, some genius, and extreme modesty." In the pulpit of Dunse church, he found a character of another stamp.—"Dr. Bowmaker, a man of strong lungs, and pretty judicious remark; but ill skilled in propriety, and altogether unconscious of his want of it." He preached a sermon against "obstinate sinners." "I am found out," whispered the Poet to a friend, "wherever I go."*

On reaching the Tweed, Ainslie requested Burns to pass the stream, that he might say he had been in England. The following brief entry is all the memoranda he makes of this event:—"Coldstream—went over to England—glorious river Tweed, clear and majestic." His companion has enabled me to complete the picture—"The Poet accompanied me on a horseback excursion from Edinburgh to Peebles, down the Tweed, all the way to Coldstream, and thence to Berrywell, near Dunse, the residence of my father. The weather was charming; both parties then youthful and in good spirits; and the Poet delighted with the fine scenery, and the many poetical associations connected with it. When we arrived at Coldstream, where the dividing line between Scotland and England is the Tweed, I suggested our going across to the other side of the river by the Coldstream bridge, that Burns might have it to say he '*had been in England*.' We did so, and were pacing slowly along on English ground, enjoying our walk, when I was astonished to see the Poet throw away his hat, and, thus uncovered, look towards Scotland, kneeling down with uplifted hands, and, apparently, in a state of great enthusiasm. I kept silence, uncertain what was next to be done, when Burns, with extreme emotion, and an expression of countenance which I will never forget, prayed for and blessed Scotland most solemnly, by pronouncing aloud, in accents of the deepest devotion, the two concluding verses of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night':—

* O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!

wrote the following lines on it, which he immediately presented to her:

"Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
Nor idle texts pursue:
'Twas guilty sinners that he meant,
Not angels such as you!"

CROMEK.]

* ["During the discourse Burns produced a neat impromptu, conveying an elegant compliment to Miss Ainslie. Dr. B. had selected a text of Scripture that contained a heavy denunciation against obstinate sinners. In the course of the sermon Burns observed the young lady turning over the leaves of her Bible, with much earnestness, in search of the text. He took out a slip of paper, and with a pencil

And, Oh! may Heav'n their simple lives prevent
From Luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd Isle.

'O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part;
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art;
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!"

At Lenel-House he drank tea with Brydone the traveller; of this he makes a brief record.—"Mr. Brydone is a man of an excellent heart, kind, joyous, and benevolent; but a good deal of the French indiscriminate complaisance—from his situation, past and present, an admirer of everything that bears a splendid title, or that possesses a large estate; Mrs. Brydone, a most elegant woman in her person and manners; the tones of her voice remarkably sweet—my reception extremely flattering." He slept at Coldstream, and then proceeded to Kelso, of which he pronounced the situation charming.—"Fine bridge over the Tweed—enchaining views and prospects on both sides of the river, particularly the Scottish side; introduced to Mr. Scott of the Royal Bank—an excellent, modest fellow."

He walked on to the ruins of Roxburgh castle; and wrote in his journal:—"A holly-bush growing where James II. of Scotland was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin, and a fine old garden, planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by an English Hottentot, a *maitre d'hôtel* of the duke's, a Mr. Cole. Climate and soil of Berwick-shire, and even Roxburgh-shire, superior to Ayr-shire—bad roads. Turnip and sheep husbandry, their great improvements. Mr. M'Dowal, of Caverton-Mill, a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, with whom I dined to day, sold his sheep, ewe and lamb together, at two guineas a piece. They wash their sheep before shearing; seven or eight pounds of washen wool in a fleece. Low markets, consequently low rents; fine lands not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre: magnificence of farmers and farm-houses." On his way up the Tiviot and the Jed, he visited an old gentleman, whose boast it was that he possessed an arm-chair which had belonged to Thomson the poet. Burns reverently examined the relique, could scarcely be prevailed to sit in it, and seemed to feel inspiration from its touch.

In Jedburgh, the Poet found much to interest him.—"Breakfast with Mr. —, a squabble between the old lady, a crazed, talkative slat-

tern, and her sister, an old maid, respecting a relief minister—Miss gives Madam the lie; and Madam, by way of revenge, upbraids her for having laid snares to entangle the said minister in the net of matrimony. Go about two miles out of the town to a roup (sale) of parks; meet a polite soldier-like gentleman, a Captain Rutherford, who had been many years in the wilds of America, a prisoner among the Indians. Charming, romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens and orchards intermingled among the houses. Fine old ruins; a once magnificent cathedral, and strong castle. All the towns here have the appearance of old rude grandeur, but the people extremely idle. Jed, a fine romantic little river." Burns dined with Captain Rutherford—the Captain a polite fellow, fond of money in his farming way; shewed a particular respect to my bardship—his lady a proper matrimonial second part of him—Miss Rutherford a beautiful girl, but too much of a woman to expose so much of a fine swelling bosom—her face very fine. Return to Jedburgh—walk up Jed with some ladies to be shewn Love-lane and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr. Potts, writer, a very clever fellow; and to Mr. Somerville, the minister of the place; a man, and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning.*]

Here he met with something not unlike a love adventure: in one of his walks he was accompanied by several ladies:—"Miss Hope, a pretty girl, fond of laughing and fun; Miss Lindsay, a good-humoured, amiable girl; rather short, *et embenpoint*, but handsome, and extremely graceful; beautiful hazel eyes full of spirit, and sparkling with delicious moisture; an engaging face, *un tout ensemble* that speaks her of the first order of female minds; her sister, a bonny strappan, rosy, sonsie lass." The Poet, would, perhaps, have contented himself with silently admiring this dangerous companion; but two venerable spinsters persecuted him so with their conversation that he took refuge with Miss Lindsay, who was touched, as he imagined, with his attentions.—"My heart," he says in his record, "is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. Miss seems very well pleased with my Bardship's distinguishing her, and after some slight qualms, which I could easily mark, she sets the titter round at defiance, and kindly allows me to keep my hold; and when parted by the ceremony of my introduction to Mr. Somerville, she met me half, to resume my situation. *Nota Bene.*—The Poet within a point and a half of being damnably in love; I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as

* [After seeing this remark in print, Dr. Somerville never pursued more. He was the author of two substantial works on the history of England between the Restoration and the accession of the Brunswick dynasty. He died, May 16, 1830,

at the age of ninety years, sixty-four of which had been passed in the clerical profession. A son of Dr. Somerville is husband to a lady distinguished in the scientific world.

much tinder as ever; I find Miss Lindsay would soon play the devil with me. The old, cross-grained, whiggish, ugly, slanderous Miss —, with all the poisonous spleen of a disappointed, ancient maid, stops me, very unseasonably, to ease her bursting breast, by falling abusively foul on the Miss Lindsays, particularly on my Dulcinea;—I hardly refrain from cursing her to her face for daring to mouth her calumnious slander on one of the finest pieces of the workmanship of Almighty Excellence! Sup at Mr. —'s; vexed that the Miss Lindsays are not of the supper party, as they only are wanting. Mrs. — and Miss — still improve infernally on my hands. Set out next morning for Wauchope, the seat of my correspondent, Mrs. Scott;—breakfast by the way with Dr. Elliott, an agreeable, good-hearted, climate-beaten, old veteran, in the medical line; now retired to a romantic, but rather moorish place, on the banks of the Roole—he accompanies us almost to Wauchope—we traverse the country to the top of Bochester, the scene of an old encampment, and Woolee Hill. Wauchope—Mr. Scott exactly the figure and face commonly given to Sancho Pança—very shrewd in his farming matters, and not unfrequently stumbles on what may be called a strong thing rather than a good thing. Mrs. Scott all the sense, taste, intrepidity of face, and bold, critical decision, which usually distinguish female authors.—Sup with Mr. Potts—agreeable party.—Breakfast next morning with Mr. Somerville—the *bruit* of Miss Lindsay and my bardship, by means of the invention and malice of Miss —. Mr. Somerville sends to Dr. Lindsay, begging him and family to breakfast if convenient, but at all events to send Miss Lindsay; accordingly Miss Lindsay only comes—I met with some little flattering attentions from her. Mrs. Somerville an excellent, motherly, agreeable woman, and a fine family.—Mr. Ainslie and Mrs. S—, juurs., with Mr. —, Miss Lindsay, and myself, go to see *Esther*, a very remarkable woman for reciting poetry of all kinds, and sometimes making Scotch doggerel herself—she can repeat by heart almost every thing she has ever read, particularly Pope's Homer from end to end—has studied Euclid by herself, and, in short, is a woman of very extraordinary abilities.—On conversing with her I find her fully equal to the character given of her.*—She is very much flattered that I send for her, and that she sees a poet who has *put out a book*, as she says.—She is, among other things, a great florist—and is rather past the meridian of once celebrated beauty. I walk in *Esther's* garden with Miss Lindsay, and after

some little chit-chat of the tender kind, I presented her with a proof print of my *Nob*, which she accepted with something more tender than gratitude. She told me many little stories which Miss — had retailed concerning her and me, with prolonging pleasure—God bless her! He seems ready to burst into song as he proceeds with his journal. "Took farewell of Jedburgh with some melancholy, disagreeable sensations. / Jed, pure be thy crystal streams, and hallowed thy sylvan banks! Sweet Isabella Lindsay, may peace dwell in thy bosom uninterrupted, except by the tumultuous throbbings of rapturous love! That love-kindling eye must beam on another, not on me: that graceful form must bless another's arms, not mine! Was waited on by the magistrates, and handsomely presented with the freedom of the town.

"Kelso; dine with the Farmer's Club; all gentlemen talking of high matters: each of them keeps a hunter, of from thirty to fifty pounds' value, and attends the fox-huntings in the county. Go out with Mr. Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, to sleep; Mr. Ker, a most gentlemanly, clever fellow; a widower, with some fine children; his mind and manner astonishingly like my dear old friend, Robert Muir, in Kilmarnock; he offers to accompany me on my English tour: dine with Sir Alexander Don; a pretty clever fellow, but far from being a match for his divine lady."

On the thirteenth of May, Burns visited Dryburgh Abbey, and, though the weather was wild, spent an hour among the ruins, since hallowed by the dust of Scott; he crossed the Leader, and went up the Tweed to Melrose, which he calls a "far-famed glorious ruin." Though desirous of musing on battle-fields, he seems to have left Ancram-moor unheeded; nor did he pause to look at the spot where

"Gallant Cessford's heart-blood dear
Reek'd on dark Elliot's border spear."

He sat for some time, indeed, among the broom of the Cowden-knowes, and had a chat with the Souters of Selkirk, concerning the field of Flodden; but no one seems to have told him of Huntly-burn, where True Thomas flirted with the Fairy Queen; nor of Philiphaugh, where Montrose and his cavaliers were routed by Lesly: nor of Carterhaugh, made memorable in song by the fine ballad of Tamlane. He was not in a pastoral mood; for he says briefly,—*"The whole country hereabout, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony."* In the inspiration necessary for verse, there is none of the spirit of prophecy; he passed over some broken ground and peat-haggs, where his mare, Jenny

* ["This extraordinary woman then moved in a very humble walk of life;—the wife of a common working gardener. She is still living—her time is principally occupied in her attentions to a little day school, which not being suf-

ficient for her subsistence, she is obliged to solicit the charity of her benevolent neighbours.

'Ah, who would love the lyre!'"

CROMEX.]

Geddes, kept her feet with difficulty, unconscious that on that desolate spot the Towers of Abbotsford would, ere long, arise, and those immortal romances be written which have made his own the second name in Scottish literature.

The weather having settled, the Poet visited Inverleithing, a famous shaw, and in the vicinity of the palace of Traquair, "where," says he, "I dined and drank some Galloway whey, and saw Elibanks and Elibraes on the other side of the Tweed." In the morning he continued his journey, and found other places made famous in tale and song.—"Dine at a country inn, kept by a miller in Earlstoun, the birth-place and residence of the celebrated Thomas the Rhymer, and saw the ruins of his castle." He now shaped his course to Dunse, where he dined with the Farmers'-Club—found it impossible to do them justice—met "the Rev. Mr. Smith, a famous punster, and Mr. Meikle, a celebrated mechanic, and inventor of the threshing-mills." The next day, "breakfast at Berrywell, and walk into Douse to see a famous knife made by a cutler there, and to be presented to an Italian prince.—A pleasant ride with my friend Mr. Robert Ainslie, and his sister, to Mr. Thomson's, a man who has newly commenced farmer, and has married a Miss Patty Grieve, formerly a flame of Mr. Robert Ainslie's.—Company—Miss Jacky Grieve, an amiable sister of Mrs. Thomson's, and Mr. Hood, an honest, worthy, facetious farmer, in the neighbourhood. Berwick he looked on as 'an idle town, rudely picturesque.' Meet Lord Errol in walking round the walls.—His Lordship's flattering notice of me.—Dine with Mr. Clunzie, merchant—nothing particular in company or conversation.—Come up a bold shore, and over a wild country to Eyemouth—sup and sleep at Mr. Grieve's. Wm. Grieve, the oldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow—takes a hearty glass, and sings a good song.—Mr. Robert, his brother, and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little. Take a sail after dinner.—Fishing of all kinds pays tythes at Eyemouth. The Miss Grieves very good girls. My Bardship's heart got a brush from Miss Betsey. Mr. William Grieve's attachment to the family-circle, so fond that when he is out, which by the bye is often the case, he cannot go to bed 'till he see if all his sisters are sleeping well.—Pass the famous Abbey of Coldingham, and Pease-bridge.—Call at Mr. Sheriff's, where Mr. A. and I dine.—Mr. S. talkative and con-

ceited. I talk of love to Nancy the whole evening, while her brother escorts home some companions like himself." At Eyemouth, he loved the look of the sea and shore so much that he took a sail after dinner; here, in compliment to his genius, so runs the brotherly record, he was made a royal arch mason of St. Abb's lodge.*—"Sir James Hall, of Dunglass, having heard," he says, "of my being in the neighbourhood, comes to Mr. Sheriff's to breakfast; takes me to see his fine scenery on the stream of Dunglass. Dunglass, the most romantic, sweet place I ever saw. Sir James and his lady, a pleasant happy couple; he points out a walk, for which he has an uncommon respect, as it was made by an aunt of his to whom he owes much." Burns seems to have fallen into something of a cynical mood on leaving the author of the ingenious work on the "Origin of Gothic Architecture." "A Mr. Robinson, brewer, at Ednam, sets out with us to Dunbar."—A lady, of whose charms and conversation he was no admirer, resolved to accompany him by way of making a parade of him as a sweetheart; his description of her is severe and clever:—"She mounts an old cart-horse, as huge and lean as a house; a rusty old side-saddle without girth or stirrup, but fastened on with an old pillion-girth: herself as fine as hands could make her, in cream-coloured riding clothes, hat and feather, &c. I, ashamed of my situation, ride like the devil, and almost shake her to pieces on old Jolly—get rid of her by refusing to call at her uncle's with her."

On reaching Dunbar he notes in his journal—"Passed through the most glorious corn country I ever saw. Dine with Provost Fall, an eminent merchant, and respectable character, but indescribable, as he exhibits no marked traits. Mrs. Fall, a genius in painting; fully more clever in the fine arts and sciences than my friend, Lady Wauchope, without her consummate assurance of her own abilities. Call with Mr. Robinson (who, by the bye, I find to be a worthy, much respected man, very modest; warm, social heart, which with less good sense than his would be perhaps, with the children of prim precision and pride, rather inimical to that respect which is man's due from man) on Miss Clarke, a maiden,—in the Scotch phrase, '*Guid enough.*' She wanted to see what sort of *raree show* an author was; and to let him know that, though Dunbar was but a

* [The entry made on this occasion in the Lodge Books of St. Abb's is honourable to

"The brethren of the mystic level."

"Eyemouth, 19th May, 1787.

"At a general Encampment held this day, the following brethren were made Royal Arch Masons, viz. Robert Burns, from the Lodge of St. James's, Tarbolton, Ayr-shire, and Robert Ainslie, from the Lodge of St. Luke's, Edinburgh, by

James Carmichael, Wm. Grieve, Daniel Dow, John Clay, Robert Grieve, &c. &c. Robert Ainslie paid one guinea admission dues; but, on account of R. Burns's remarkable poetical genius, the Encampment unanimously agreed to admit him gratis, and considered themselves honoured by having a man of such shining abilities for one of their companions."

Extracted from the Minute Book of the Lodge by

THOS. BOWHILL.]

little town, yet it was not destitute of people of parts. Breakfast next morning at Skateraw, at Mr. Lee's, a farmer of great note.—Mr. Lee, an excellent, hospitable, social fellow, rather oddish; warm-hearted and chatty—a most judicious, sensible farmer. Mr. Lee detains me till next morning.—Company at dinner.—My Rev. acquaintance Dr. Bownaker, a reverend, rattling old fellow.—Two sea lieutenants; a cousin of the landlord's." The sarcastic humour of the Poet continues: he meets a lady, "but no Brent new; a clever woman, with tolerable pretensions to remark and wit, while time had blown the blushing bud of bashful modesty into the full-blossomed flower of easy confidence." "A fellow whose looks are of that kind which deceived me in a gentleman at Kelso, and has often deceived me; a goodly, handsome figure and face, which incline one to give them credit for parts which they have not." "Mr. Clarke, a much cleverer fellow, but whose looks, a little cloudy, and his appearance rather ungainly, with an every day observer, may prejudice the opinion against him. Dr. Brown, a medical young gentleman from Dunbar, a fellow whose face and manners are open and engaging.—Leave Skateraw for Dunse next day, along with collector —, a lad of slender abilities, and bashfully diffident to an extreme." The cloud now begins to pass away. In good time comes an antidote; he reached Dunse, and "found Miss Ainslie, the amiable, the sensible, the good-humoured and sweet Miss Ainslie, all alone at Berrywell. Heavenly powers, who know the weakness of human hearts, support mine! What happiness must I see only to remind me that I cannot enjoy it! Lammer-muir Hills, from East Lothian to Dunse very wild.—Dine with the Farmer's Club at Kelso. Sir John Hume and Mr. Lumsden there, but nothing worth remembrance, when the following circumstance is considered—I walk into Dunse before dinner, and out to Berrywell in the evening with Miss Ainslie. How well-bred, how frank, how good she is! Charming Rachel! may thy bosom never be wrung by the evils of this life of sorrows, or by the villainy of this world's sons!"

Burns was now joined by Mr. Ker; they dined with Mr. Hood, and set off on a jaunt to England: sudden illness seized him by the way; the entry in his journal is characteristic.—"I am taken extremely ill, with strong feverish symptoms, and take a servant of Mr. Hood's to watch me all night. Embittering remorse scares my fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death. I am determined to live for the future in such a manner as not to be scared at the approach of Death: I am sure I could meet him with indifference but for The something beyond the grave." He recovered his health and spirits, and went to see the roup (auction) of an unfortunate farmer's stock. He surveyed the scene with a darkening brow and a

troubled eye.—"Rigid economy, and decent industry," he said, "do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis persona* in such a scene of horror! Meet my good old friend Mr. Ainslie, who calls on Mr. Hood in the evening, to take farewell of my Bardship. This day I feel myself warm with sentiments of gratitude to the great Preserver of men, who has kindly restored me to health and strength once more. A pleasant walk with my young friend, Douglas Ainslie, a sweet, modest, clever young fellow." He now recommenced his tour.

"Sunday, May 27.—Cross Tweed, and traverse the moors, through a wild country, till I reach Alnwick—Alnwick-Castle, a seat of the Duke of Northumberland, furnished in a most princely manner. A Mr. Wilkin, agent of His Grace, shews us the house and policies. Mr. Wilkin, a discreet, sensible, ingenious man. Monday—Come still through bye-ways to Warkworth, where we dine. Warkworth, situated very picturesque, with Coquet Island, a small rocky spot, the seat of an old monastery, facing it a little in the sea; and the small but romantic river Coquet running through it. Sleep at Morpeth, a pleasant-enough little town, and on next day to Newcastle." Meet with a very agreeable, sensible fellow, a Mr. Chattox, who shews us a great many civilities, and who dines and sups with us." The Poet seems to have found little in Newcastle to interest him: tradition says that at dinner he was startled at seeing the meat served before the soup. "This," said his facetious entertainer, "is in obedience to a Northumberland maxim, which enjoins us to eat the beef before we sup the broth, lest the hungry Scotch make an inroad and snatch it." Burns laughed heartily. On leaving Newcastle he rode over a fine country to Hexham, to breakfast—from Hexham to Wardrue, the celebrated Spa, where he slept. Thence he proceeded on to Longtown, which he reached on a hiring day.—"I am uncommonly happy," he says, "to see so many young folks enjoying life." Here he parted with his good friends, Messrs. Hood and Ker. He arrives at Carlisle, and meets his good friend, Mr. Mitchell, and walks with him round the town and its environs, and through his printing-works, &c.—"four or five hundred people employed, many of them women and children.—Dine with Mr. Mitchell, and leave Carlisle.—Come by the coast to Annan.—Overtaken on the way by a curious old fish of a shoemaker, and miner, from Cumberland mines."

[Here the Manuscript of his Border Tour abruptly terminates.]

He sat down and gave a brief account of his jaunt, to his friend Nicol, in very particular Scotch; saying, in conclusion, "I'll be in Dumfries the morn, gif the beast be to the fore, and

the branks bide hale. Gude be wi' you, Willie. Amen."

From Carlisle he went along the coast to Annan and Dumfries.—"I am quite charmed," he says, "with Dumfries folks. Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember: and his wife—Gude forgie me; I had almost broke the tenth Commandment on her account. Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good humour, and kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart: in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her." Burns next proceeded to Dalswinton, and walked over the unoccupied farms; but, though he expressed himself pleased with the general aspect of the valley, he declined for the time the handsome offer of a four-nineteen years' lease on his own terms; and, saying he would return in autumn, departed. "From my view of the lands," he said in a letter to Nicol, "and Mr. Miller's reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended, but still they are but slender."

The friends of Burns considered this an agricultural rather than a poetic tour. It partook of the nature of both; remarks on varieties of soil; rotation of crop, and on land, pastoral or cultivated, mingle curiously with sketches of personal character, notices of visits paid to hoary ruins, or to scenes memorable in song. His curiosity was excited: his heart a little touched, but neither the fine scenery, nor the lovely women, produced any serious effect on his muse. The sole poetic fruit of the excursion is an epistle to Creech, dated Selkirk, May 13, and written, he says, "Nearly extempore, in a solitary inn, after a miserable wet day's riding." It is, in its nature, complimentary: the dripping sky, and, "the worst inn's worst room," induced the Poet to make light of

"The Eden scenes on crystal Jed,
And Ettrick banks, now roaring red,"

and think of the wit and the wine of Edinburgh, and see, in imagination, philosophers, poets,

"And toothy critics by the score,
In bloody raw,"

crowding to the levee of the patronizing bibliopole.

After an absence of six busy, and to him eventful, months, Burns returned to Mossiel the 8th of June, 1787. His mother, a woman of few words, met him with tears of joy in her eyes at the threshold, saying, "Oh, Robert!" He had left her hearth in the darkness of night, and he came back in the brightness of day; he went away an obscure and almost nameless adventurer, and he returned with a name, round which there was already a halo not destined soon to be eclipsed. In his own eyes, his early

aspirations after fame seemed as hopeless as "the blind groping of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave;" he had now made his way to the mountain-top, his pipe was at his lips, and all the country round was charmed with his melody. The last lines which he expected to measure in Caledonia were not yet uttered, and he who, to use his words, was lately

"Darkling dern'd in glens and hallows,
And hunted, as was William Wallace,
By constables, those blackguard fellows,
And bailies baith,"

was now a poet of the highest order; the fit and accepted companion of the proud and the lordly, with gold, the fruits of his genius, in his pocket, and more promised by the muse. Those who formerly were cold or careless, now approached to praise and to welcome him; while his mother, who never imagined that aught good could come from idle rhyme, received all as something dropped from heaven, and rejoiced in the fame of her son.

He remained at home some ten or twelve days. He went little out. His acquaintance with Jean Armour was probably not at that time renewed, nor did he visit more than one friend or two; his chief occupation was in writing to his literary acquaintances, and discussing with his brother Gilbert the chances of success in agriculture. He was restless—he was not satisfied with his position in society; he neither belonged to the high nor to the low. Rank, he felt, had taken his hand coldly to squeeze and to drop it, while his rustic brethren looked upon him as having risen above their condition. The feeling which agitated him are forcibly—nay, darkly, expressed in a letter to Nicol, dated Mauchline, June 18:—"I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of any thing generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity—the intrepid, unyielding independence—the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, Satan. 'Tis true, I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith—that noxious planet, so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business. Add to all that, thoughtless follies and hare-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with

step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop, 'he falls, like Lucifer, never to hope again.' God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me! but should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind.... The many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think, I have, in life, I have felt along the lines, and d—n them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune."

"Among those," says Lockhart, "who having formerly 'eyed him askance,' now appeared sufficiently ready to court his society, were the family of Jean Armour. Burns's affection for the beautiful young woman had outlived his resentment of her compliance with her father's commands in the preceding summer; and, from the time of this reconciliation, it is probable he always looked forward to a permanent union with the mother of his children."

"Burns at least fancied himself to be busy with serious plans for his future establishment; and was very naturally disposed to avail himself, as far as he could, of the opportunities of travel and observation, which an interval of leisure, destined probably to be a short one, might present. Moreover, in spite of his gloomy language, a specimen of which has just been quoted, we are not to doubt that he derived much pleasure from witnessing the extensive popularity of his writings, and from the flattering homage he was sure to receive in his own person, in the various districts of his native country; nor can any one wonder that, after the state of high excitement in which he had spent the winter and spring, he, fond as he was of his family, and eager to make them partakers in all his good fortune, should have, just at this time, found himself incapable of sitting down contentedly, for any considerable period together, in so humble and quiet a circle as that of Mossgiel."]

In this mood he left Mauchline, and hurried to Edinburgh.

In some of the doings of Burns during the latter half of the year 1787, we see a mind "unfitted with an aim;" he moved much about without any visible purpose in his motions. We have now to follow him northward in three successive and hurried excursions, in which he passed into the Western Highlands, examined Stirling-shire, and penetrated eastward as far as Inverness. In his first tour he was mounted on Jenny Geddes, named after the devout virago who threw a stool at the Dean of Edinburgh's head—perhaps the lady celebrated in song:—

"Jenny Geddes was the gossip
Put the gown upon the Bishop."

Of this journey we know little that is pleasant.

Burns seems to have been possessed with a spirit of ill-humour during the greater part of the expedition. He first bent his steps to Carron, and, desiring to see the celebrated Foundry, was repulsed from the gate, rudely as he thought: for he put his complaint into no very decorous language:—

"We came na' here to view your works
In hopes to be mair wise,
But only, lest we gang to hell,
It might be nae surprise."

He then proceeded to Stirling. The Poet was an intense lover of his country and her glory: the displeasure with which the people of Scotland regarded the Union, which had removed all visible symbols of power and independence, was not in those days subsided; and, when he looked on the Hall, where princes once ruled and Scottish parliaments assembled, and reflected that it was laid in ruins by a prince of the house of Hanover, he gave vent to his proper indignation in the following lines:—

"Here Stuarts once in glory reigned,
And laws for Scotland's weal ordained;
But now unroof'd their palace stands,
Their sceptre's sway'd by other hands;
The injur'd Stuart line is gone,
A race outlandish fills the throne."

Two other lines followed, forming the bitter point to the epigram—they were remembered in after-days to the poet's injury. He seems not to have been very sensible at that time of his imprudence;—for some one said, "Burns, this will do you no good."—"I shall reprove myself," he said; and wrote these aggravating words:

"Rash mortal, and slanderous poet, thy name
Shall no longer appear in the records of fame;
Does not know that old Mansfield, who writes like the Bible,
Says, the more 'tis a truth, Sir, the more 'tis a libel?"

Such satire was not likely to pass without remonstrance; Hamilton, of Gladmair, wrote a reply, wherein he lamented that a mind,

"Where Genius lights her brightest fires,"

should disdain truth, and law, and justice;

"And, skulking with a villain's aim,
Thus basely stab his monarch's fame."

There are few who will not concur in the propriety of this rebuke. This writer, however, resolved to be prophet, as well as poet and priest:—

"Yes, Burns, 'tis o'er—thy race is run,
And shades receive thy setting sun:
These few rash lines shall damn thy name,
And blast thy hopes of future fame."

Poetic sarcasms on ruling powers may keep a man from rising in the church where princes are patrons, but they have no influence on his

ascent up Parnassus : of this no one was more aware than Burns, nor was he long at a loss for an answer to the minister of Gladsmuir,

"Like Esop's lion, Burns says, sore I feel
All others scorn—but damn that ass's heel."

After leaving Stirling, we hear no more of Burns till, having traversed a portion of the Western Highlands, passed through Inverary, and made his appearance at Arrochar, he thus addresses Ainslie : "I write you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains ; thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins." This was on the 28th of June. At Inverary, he found the principal inn filled by a visiting party to the Duke of Argyle, who engrossed all the attention of the landlord ; and the poor Bard, mounted on a sorry mare, without friend or lackey, was neglected. He avenged himself with unmerited bitterness :—

"Whoe'er he be who sojourns here,
I pity much his case,
Unless he's come to wait upon
The lord their god, his Grace ;
There's naething here but Highland pride,
But Highland cauld and hunger ;
If Providence has sent me here
'Twas surely in his anger."

If the Poet wrote these lines on the window of the inn, he must have administered the spur at his departure with little mercy to the sides of Jenny Geddes ; for Highland wrath is as hot as Highland hospitality.

Burns recovered his composure of mind before reaching Dumbarton ; he had, moreover, fallen into very pleasant company. Having dined with a hospitable Highland gentleman, he was introduced to a merry party, and danced till the ladies left them, at three in the morning.—"Our dancing," says the Bard, "was none of the French or English insipid formal movements. The ladies sung Scotch songs like Angels ; then we flew at 'Bab at the bowster,' 'Tulloch-gorum,' 'Loch-Erroch side,' &c., like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or crows prognosticating a storm in a hairst day. When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six ; except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Benlomond. We all kneeled. Our worthy landlord's son held the bowl, each man a full glass in his hand, and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense : like Thomas the Rhymer's prophecies, I suppose."

These Highland high-jinks were not yet concluded. After a few hours' sleep they dined

at another good fellow's house, and consequently pushed the bottle ; Burns then mounted his mare, and, accompanied by two friends, rode along Lochlomond side on his way to Dumbarton.—"We found ourselves," he says, "'no very fou, but gayly yet,' and I rode soberly, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip-and-spur. My companions fell sadly a-stern ; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, strained past the Highlandman, in spite of all his efforts with the hair halter. Just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's breechless bottom into a clift hedge, and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny trode over me with such cautious reverence that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected ; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future. As for the rest of my acts and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes, they shall be recorded, in a few weeks hence at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory."

Burns returned to Mauchline by the way of Glasgow, and remained with his mother during the latter part of the month of July. He renewed his intercourse with the family of the Armourers. Jean's heart still beat tenderly towards "the plighted husband of her youth ;" and Burns, much as his pride was wounded, could not help regarding her with affection. He had, as yet, no very defined notion of what he should do in the world ; he trusted to time and chance. "I have yet fixed," he thus writes to a friend, "on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am just as usual—a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon—I was going to say a wife, too ; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am afraid I have almost ruined one source, the principal one indeed, of my former happiness—that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. My heart no more glows with feverish rapture. I have no paradisiacal evening interviews, stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only * * * *. This last is one of your distant acquaintances, has a fine figure, and elegant manners ; and, in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal ; but what piques me is her conduct at the commencement of our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in ———,

and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp round the waist, I ventured, in my careless way, to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms; and after her return to ———, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words farther, I suppose, than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve, like a mounting lark in an April morning; and wrote me an answer which measured me out very completely what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climate of her favour. But I am an old hawk at the sport, and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply as brought my bird from her aerial towerings, pop, down at my foot, like Corporal Trim's hat." The young lady to whom the poet alludes in this letter was very beautiful and very proud—it is said she gave his bardship such a specimen of both her pride and temper as

"Made poor Robin stand abeigh."

"I am but a younger son of the house of Parnassus; and, like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue, if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry."

It is plain that Burns regarded the burning of his marriage lines as not only destroying all evidence of his engagements with Jean Armour, but as a deliberate revocation of vows, on her part, which released him from the responsibilities of wedlock. Nay, this seems to have been the notion of graver men; for the Poet thus writes to David Bryce, July 17th, 1786:—"Poor Jean is come back to Mauchline. I went to call for her, but her mother forbade me the house. I have already appeared publicly in church, and was indulged in the liberty of standing in my own seat. I do this to get a certificate as a bachelor, which Mr. Auld has promised me." In this I see the anxiety of Mr. Armour to obliterate all traces of the marriage, and the concurrence, at least, of the Poet in the proceeding. Robert Burns and Jean Armour might permit their friends to regard them as unmarried, and, if such was their own pleasure, call themselves single; but their children were not, I apprehend, affected in their claims to legitimacy by this disavowal on the part of their parents; the law would, I think, enforce their rights for them in spite of the disclamation of both father and mother. Nay, I suspect, the law refuses to recognize any other dissolution of wedlock than what is effected by civil or ecclesiastical authority. However this may be, the Poet affected all the freedom of speech and action which custom concedes to bachelors, and seemed oftener than once on the point of unwittingly agitating the question, whether an Ayr-shire lass or an Edinburgh lady should plead a property in his hand.

The second excursion of Burns towards the north was made in the company of Dr. Adair, of Harrow-gate, whom chance made into a comrade, and who fortunately retained the particulars of the journey in his memory. He set out early in August from Edinburgh, passed through Linlithgow, and made his appearance again at the gates of Carron Foundry—they were opened with an apology for former rudeness, which mollified the bard; and he beheld in their tremendous furnaces and broiling labours a resemblance to the cavern of the Cyclops. A resemblance of a less classical kind had before occurred to him. From Carron he hurried to Stirling, that he might break and replace the pane of glass in the inn window, on which he had written those rash and injurious lines already alluded to; and then he proceeded to visit Ramsay of Ochertyre, whose romantic residence on the Teith he admired greatly, and whose conversation, rife as it was with knowledge of Scottish literature, was altogether after his own heart. This visit was brief, but full of interest. The laird of Ochertyre had a memory filled with old traditions and old songs. He had written some ingenious essays on the olden poetry, displaying feeling and taste; and moreover, the walls of his house were hung with long Latin inscriptions, much to the wonder of the unlearned Bard of Kyle.

They discussed fit topics for the muse—a rustic drama, and Scottish Georgics. "What beautiful landscapes of rural life and manners," says Ramsay, "might not have been expected from a pencil so faithful and forcible as his, which could have exhibited scenes as familiar and interesting as those in the Gentle Shepherd, which every one who knows our swains, in their unadulterated state, instantly recognizes as true to nature. But to have executed either of these plans, steadiness and abstraction from company were wanted, not genius." Of Burns' power of conversation, he says, "I have been in the company of many men of genius, some of them poets, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him—the impulse of the moment—sparks of celestial fire." It is painful to think that the celestial sayings of the Poet have vanished from men's memories, while the less mental and grosser things remain. He continued two days on the Teith, and then proceeded to Harvieston, where he was received with much respect and kindness by Mrs. Hamilton and her daughters. Here he saw Charlotte Hamilton for the first time.—"She is not only beautiful," he thus wrote to her brother Gavin, of Mauchline, "but lovely. Her form is elegant, her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness, and the settled complacency of good nature in the highest degree; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise

of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress :—

' Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say her body thought.'

Her eyes are fascinating ; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness, and a noble mind."

The account of Dr. Adair supplies some circumstances which Burns has omitted :—

"At Stirling we met with a company of travellers from Edinburgh, among whom was a character in many respects congenial with that of Burns. This was Nicol, one of the teachers of the High Grammar School at Edinburgh—the same wit and power of conversation ; the same fondness for convivial society, and thoughtlessness of to-morrow characterised both. Jacobitical principles in politics were also common to both of them ; and these have been suspected, since the Revolution of France, to have given place in each to opinions apparently opposite. I regret that I have preserved no *memorabilia* of their conversation. Many songs were sung, which I mention for the sake of observing that, when Burns was called upon in his turn, he was accustomed, instead of singing, to recite one or other of his own shorter poems, with tone and emphasis which, though not correct or harmonious, were impressive and pathetic.

"From Stirling we went next morning through the romantic and fertile vale of Devon to Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, then inhabited by Mrs. Hamilton, with the younger part of whose family Burns had been previously acquainted. He introduced me to the family ; and there was formed my first acquaintance with Mrs. Hamilton's eldest daughter, to whom I have been married for many years. Thus was I indebted to Burns for a connexion from which I have derived, and expect further to derive, much happiness.

"During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to various parts of the surrounding scenery, particularly Castle-Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle ; and the famous cataract of the Devon, called the Cauldron-Linn ; and the Rumbling-Bridge, a single broad arch, thrown by the devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. I am surprised that none of these scenes should have called forth an exertion

of Burns' muse ; but I doubt if he had much taste for the picturesque. I well remember that the ladies at Harvieston, who accompanied us on the jaunt, expressed their disappointment at his not expressing in more glowing and fervid language his impressions of the Cauldron-Linn scene—certainly highly sublime, and somewhat horrible. A visit to Mrs. Bruce, of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings powerfully. This venerable dame, with characteristic dignity, informed me, on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honour of knighthood, observing that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people*. Her political tenets were as Jacobitical as the Poet's, a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception. She gave us as her first toast after dinner, 'Awa uncoss,' or away with the strangers ;—who these strangers were you will readily understand.

"Mrs. Adair corrects me by saying it should be 'Hoochi uncoss'—a sound used by the shepherds in directing their dogs to drive away the sheep.

"At Dunfermline, we visited the ruined abbey, and the abbey-church, now consecrated to Presbyterian worship. Here I mounted the *catty-stool*, or stool of repentance, assuming the character of a penitent for fornication ; while Burns, in the character of priest, admonished me from the pulpit on the enormity of my transgression, and the frequency of its occurrence. The ludicrous reproof and exhortation which he addressed to me were, of course, parodied from what had been delivered to himself in Ayrshire, where he assured me he had once been one of seven who mounted the *seat of shame* together.

"In the churchyard, Burns knelt down, and kissed with much fervour the broad flag-stone which covered the grave of the great restorer of Scottish independence, Robert Bruce, and execrated the want of respect shewn by the local authorities to the dust of the first of Scottish heroes.* They returned to Edinburgh by the way of Kinross and Queensferry.

* According to Fordun, Robert Bruce was buried in the middle of the choir of Dunfermline Abbey. Barbour describes the interment of this illustrious Scottish monarch in these lines :—

' They have had him to Dunfermline
And him solemnly yirded syne,
In a fair tomb into the quire,
Bishops and prelates that were there
Assoziled him, when the service
Was done, as they best could decide,
And syne upon the other day,
Sorry and wo they went their way ;

And he debowelled was cleanly,
And also balm'd syne full richly ;
And the worthy Lord of Douglas,
His heart as it forsaken was,
Received as in great dewtie,
With fair and great solemnitie.'

The neglect so much execrated by Burns has been since repaired. When the new parish church of Dunfermline was erected in 1818, it was made to enclose the burial place of the kings, and on this occasion the tomb of the Bruce was opened. The body of the hero was found reduced to a skeleton. The lead in which it had been wrapped was still entire, and even some of a fine linen cloth, embroidered with

The complaint of Dr. Adair and the Harvieston ladies that Burns broke out into no poetic raptures on visiting the magnificence of the Caldron-Linn, or the melancholy splendour of Castle-Campbell, and that, because he was next to silent, they concluded he had no taste for the picturesque, may be assigned to other reasons:—he disliked to be tutored in matters of taste, and could not endure that one should run shouting before him whenever any fine object appeared. On one occasion of this kind, a lady at the Poet's side said, "Burns, have you nothing to say of this?"—"Nothing, madam," he replied, glancing at the leader of the party, "for an ass is braying over it." One evening, Lockhart relates, as the Poet passed near the Carron Foundry, when the furnaces were casting forth flames, his companion exclaimed, "Look, Burns! look! good heavens, look! look—what a glorious sight!"—"Sir," said the Bard, clapping spurs to Jenny Geddes, "I would not look! look! at your bidding, if it were the mouth of hell!" When he visited Creehope-Linn, in Dumfries-shire, at every turn of the stream and bend of the wood he was called loudly upon to admire the shelving sinuosities of the burn, and the caverned splendour of its all but inaccessible banks—it was thought by those with him that he did not shew rapture enough—"I could not admire it more, Sir," said the Poet, "if He who made it were to ask me to do it."

There were other reasons for the Poet being "so bashful and so grave" in the company of the Harvieston ladies. From his frequent praise in prose, from his admiration in song, and the general tone of his conversation, I cannot avoid concluding that he thought more than favourably of Charlotte Hamilton. In the presence of female loveliness, Burns could see no landscape beauty; with Charlotte beside him, the Caldron-Linn seemed an ordinary cascade, and Castle-Gloom not at all romantic. There is no positive evidence that he paid his addresses to the "Fairest Maid of Devon Banks;" but he did much to render himself acceptable, and, as an oblique way of making his approach, he strove, and not without success, to merit the good opinion of her companion, Margaret Chalmers, a young lady of beauty as well as sense, now Mrs. Hay of Edinburgh. I can give but an imperfect account of the progress of the Poet's passion, for some twelve or fourteen of his most carefully written and gently expressed letters were, in an evil hour, thrown into the fire by Charlotte Hamilton, and all the record we have are his senga and what is contained in his correspondence.

Of the lyrical lime-twigs which the Poet

laid on the banks of the Devon, he gives the following intimation, in a letter to Margaret Chalmers:—"Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment. The air is admirable; true old Highland; it was the tune of a Gaelic song which an Inverness lady sung me, and I was so charmed with it that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing, for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number, so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first-rate, though I am convinced it is very well; and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies, it is not only sincere, but just." The Poet alludes to his sweet and graceful song, "The Banks of the Devon." The praise is figurative:—

"Let Bourbon exult in his gay gilded lilies,
And England, triumphant, display her proud rose,
A fairer than either adorns the green valleys
Where Devon, sweet Devon, meandering flows."

Having secured her immortality in song, and probably observed the coldness with which his harmonious compliments were received, Burns complains, obliquely, of Charlotte's want of sympathy, by imagining that his words have no longer any fascination for woman. "My rhetoric," he says, "seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind; I have seen the day—but that is 'a tale of other years.'—In my conscience, I believe that my heart has been so often on fire that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night; I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship; I am charmed with the wild but graceful eccentricity of their motions, and—wish them good night. I mean this with respect to a certain passion *dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'être un miserable esclave*: as for friendship, you and Charlotte have given me pleasure—permanent pleasure—'which the world cannot give nor take away,' I hope; and which will outlast the heavens and the earth."

The third and last tour of Burns was performed in the company of Nicol. The master of the High-school had made himself agreeable to the Poet by an intrepid mode of expression, and an admiration of whatever was hair-brained and sentimental. He was

"A fiery ether-cap; a fractious chiel,"

and altogether one of those companions who require prudent management. They commenced their tour in a post chaise, on the 25th of August, 1787. Burns kept a journal of the journey: it is now before me, and begins thus:

gold, which had formed his shroud. His bones having been deposited in a new leaden coffin, half an inch thick, seven feet long, two feet five inches broad, and two feet in depth, into which was poured melted pitch to preserve them, he was re-

interred with much state and solemnity, by the Barons of the Exchequer, many of the most distinguished noblemen and gentlemen of the county being present. The tomb of the Bruce is immediately under the pulpit of the new church.

--"I leave Edinburgh for a northern tour, in company with my good friend Mr. Nicol, whose originality of humour promises me much entertainment.—Linlithgow—a fertile improved country.—West Lothian;—the more elegance and luxury among the farmers, I always observe, in equal proportion the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c.; and for this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste—a 'man of feeling'—will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds, of the peasantry in Ayrshire (peasantry they are all below the justice of peace) than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when he, at the same time, considers the Vandalism of their plough-folks, &c. I carry this idea so far that an unenclosed, half-improved country is to me actually more agreeable, and gives me more pleasure as a prospect, than a country cultivated like a garden." The Poet refused to look on the world through the coloured spectacles of political economists; he preferred happiness to wealth.

The soil about Linlithgow he considered as light and thin; the town carries the appearance of rude, decayed, idle grandeur, and the situation charmingly retired and rural.—"The old Royal Palace," says his journal, "is a tolerable fine but melancholy ruin, sweetly situated on a small elevation by the brink of a loch. Shewn the room where the beautiful injured Mary Queen of Scots was born. A very pretty good old Gothic church, with the infamous stool of repentance standing, in the old Romish way, on a lofty situation. What a poor pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship! Dirty, narrow, and squalid; stuck in a corner of old Popish grandeur, such as Linlithgow, and much more, Melrose! Ceremony and show, if judiciously thrown in, absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in religious and civil matters. Go to my friend Smith's at Avon print-field—find nobody but Mrs. Meller, an agreeable, sensible, modest, good lady; as useful, but not so ornamental, as Fielding's Miss Western—not rigidly polite *a la Français*, but easy, hospitable, and housewifely. An old lady from Paisley, a Mrs. Lawson, whom I promise to call for in Paisley—like old Lady W——, and still more like Mrs. C——, her conversation is pregnant with strong sense and just remark, but, like them, a certain air of self-importance and a *durcesse* in the eye, seem to indicate, as the Ayrshire wife observed of her cow, that

'She had a mind o' her ain!'

He continues his tour, and his remarks—

"Pleasant view of Dunfermline, and the

rest of the fertile coast of Fife, as we go down to that dirty, ugly place, Borrowstoness—see a horse-race, and call on a friend of Mr. Nicol, a Bailie Cowan, of whom I know too little to attempt his portrait. Come through the rich Carse of Falkirk to pass the night. At Falkirk nothing remarkable, except the grave of Sir John the Grahame, over which, in the succession of time, four stones have been placed.—Camelon, the ancient metropolis of the Picts, now a small village in the neighbourhood of Falkirk.—Cross the grand canal to Carron.—Come past Larbert and admire a fine monument of cast-iron erected by Bruce, the African traveller, to his wife. Pass Dunipace—a place laid out with fine taste—a charming amphitheatre, bounded by Denny village, and pleasant seats. The Carron, running down the bosom of the whole, makes it one of the most charming little prospects I have seen. Dine at Auchinbowie.—Mr. Monro an excellent, worthy old man.—Miss Monro, an amiable, sensible, sweet young woman, much resembling Mrs. Grierson. Come on to Bannockburn; shewn the old house where James III. finished so tragically his unfortunate life;—the field of Bannockburn,—the hole where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested.—I fancy to myself that I see my gallant, heroic countrymen coming o'er the hill, and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers: noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, blood-thirsty foe! I see them meet in glorious-triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence!"*

"Here," says Lockhart, "we have the germ of Burns' famous *Ode on the Battle of Bannockburn*."

"Sic words spake they of their king;
And for his hie undertaking
Ferryit and yernit him for to see,
That with him aye was wont to be."

I prefer, however, the account briefly rendered in one of his letters to all the rapture of his journal.—"Stirling, August 26.—This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Grahame, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace, and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old Caledonia, over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert the Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen, by the setting sun, the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich

* ["In the last words of Burns' note above quoted," says Lockhart, "he perhaps glances at a beautiful trait of old Barbour, where he describes Bruce's soldiers crowding

around him at the conclusion of one of his hard-fought days, with as much curiosity as if they had never seen his person before.]

Carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich Carse of Falkirk." The ancient glory of his country, and the deeds of her heroes, were ever present to his mind.

In his way to Crieff, Burns saw the Ochel-hills, the Devon, the Teith, and the Allan; he rode up the romantic Earn; visited Strathallan, "a fine country, but little improved;" Auchtertyre, where "grows the aik," as his own imitable song says, and, going up Glen-Almond, he visited the "traditionary grave" of Ossian. Making his way to Taymouth, he gazed long and earnestly on the spreading vale, the princely towers, and the expanding sea: his journal merely states "*Taymouth—described in rhyme.*" This alludes to the verses written with a pencil over the mantel-piece of the parlour in the inn at Kenmore; some of which, says Lockhart, are among his best English heroics—

"Poetic ardours in my bosom swell,
Lone wand'ring by the hermit's mossy cell:
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods:
The incessant roar of headlong-tumbling floods,"
Here Poesy might wake her heav'n-taught lyre,
And look through nature with creative fire;
Here, to the wrongs of fate half-reconcil'd
Misfortune's light'en'd steps might wander wild;
And disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to sooth her bitter, rankling wounds:
Here heart-struck grief might heaven-ward stretch her scan,
And injur'd worth forget, and pardon man."

He passed through Dunkeld, visited the Lyon river, and knelt and said prayers in the Druid's temple, a smaller Stonehenge: of this piece of antiquity, he says, "Three circles of stone—the outermost sunk—the second has thirteen stones remaining—the innermost has eight—two large detached ones, like a gate to the south-east." Of Aberfeldy he briefly writes—"described in rhyme." He composed "The Birks of Aberfeldy" as he stood by the falls; the scene is truly beautiful, and the song rivals in truth and effect the landscape. Thence he proceeded to Birnam top: looked down the Tay, and visited a Hermitage on the Bran-water dedicated to the genius of Ossian.—"Breakfast with Dr. Stewart; Neil Gow plays—a short, stout-built, honest Highland figure, with his greyish hair shed on his honest social brow; an interesting face, marking strong sense; kind open-heartedness, mixed with unmisstrusting simplicity;† visit his house—Margaret Gow."

* [It is *not* true, says Lockhart, that this stone marks the spot where Dundee received his death wound.]

† [Another northern bard has sketched this eminent musician thus:—

"The blythe Strathspey springs up, reminding some
Of nights when Gow's old arm (nor old the tale),
Unceasing, save when reeking cans went round,
Made heart and heel leap light as bounding roe.
Alas! no more shall we behold that look
So venerable, yet so blent with mirth,
And festive joy sedate; that ancient garb
Unvaried,—tartan hose, and bonnet blue!

He next passed up Loch Tummel to Blair. "Fascally, a beautiful romantic nest—wild grandeur of the Pass of Gilliecrankie—visit the gallant Lord Dundee's stone."* In remembrance of this, in one of his after songs he makes a soldier of Mackay's say—

"The bauld Pitcur fell in a fur,
And Clavers got a clankie,
Else I'd hae fed an Athole gled
On the braes of Killiecrankie."

From the battle field, Burns proceeded to the palace of the Duke of Athol, at Blair, where he was welcomed with much kindness and courtesy:—"Sup with the duchess; easy and happy from the manners of the family; confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker." Such is his brief record of this event; Professor Walker, who was at this period tutor to the family of Athol, merited the eulogium, and more; no sooner did he observe Nicol than, knowing the manners of the man, he prepared an entertainment according to the nature of the fierce pedagogue. A fishing-rod and a servant to attend him by day, and choice wine and a snug table at night, charmed Nicol, and left Burns leisure to converse with the Duke and Duchess, and visit the scenes around, which he declared were fine by nature, but hurt by bad taste. Of the visit and visiter, the Professor has given us the following account:—

"On reaching Blair, he sent me notice of his arrival (as I had previously been acquainted with him), and I hastened to meet him at the inn. The Duke, to whom he brought a letter of introduction, was from home; but the Duchess, being informed of his arrival, gave him an invitation to sup and sleep at Athol House. Burns accepted the invitation; but, as the hour of supper was at some distance, he begged I would in the interval be his guide through the grounds. It was already growing dark; yet the softened, though faint and uncertain, view of their beauties, which the moonlight afforded us, seemed exactly suited to the state of his feelings at the time. I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw him-

No more shall Beauty's partial eye draw forth
The full intoxication of his strain,
Mellifluous, strong, exuberantly rich!
No more, amid the pauses of the dance,
Shall he repeat those measures that, in days
Of other years, could soothe a falling prince,
And light his visage with a transient smile
Of melancholy joy,—like autumn sun
Gilding a sere tree with a passing beam!
Or play to sportive children on the green
Dancing at gloamin' hour; on willing cheer
With strains unbought, the shepherd's bridal day."
GRAHAM—*British Georgic*

self on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. I cannot help thinking it might have been here that he conceived the idea of the following lines, which he afterwards introduced into his poem on Bruar Water, when only fancying such a combination of objects as were now present to his eye:—

"Or, by the reapers' nightly beam,
Mild, chequering through the trees,
Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze."

It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time for supper. My curiosity was great to see how Burns would conduct himself in company so different from what he had been accustomed to. His manner was unembarrassed, plain, and firm. He appeared to have complete reliance on his own native good sense for directing his behaviour. He seemed at once to perceive and appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but when led into it he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The Duchess's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as 'honest men and bonnie lasses,' an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed his poem. Next day I took a ride with him through some of the most romantic parts of that neighbourhood, and was highly gratified by his conversation. As a specimen of his happiness of conception and strength of expression, I will mention a remark which he made on his fellow-traveller, who was walking at the time a few paces before us. He was a man of a robust but clumsy person; and while Burns was expressing to me the value he entertained for him, on account of his vigorous talents, although they were clouded at times by coarseness of manners; 'in short,' he added, 'his mind is like his body, he has a confounded strong in-kneed sort of a soul.' Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted."

[It appears that the impression made by our poet on the noble family of Athol was in a high degree favourable; it is certain he was charmed with the reception he received from them, and he often mentioned the two days he spent at Athol-house as among the happiest of his life. He was warmly invited to prolong his

stay, but sacrificed his inclinations to his engagement with Mr. Nicol.]

It was the wish of the Duke that Burns should visit the banks of the Bruar, where the scenery is bold and naked. The Poet, accustomed to the woody banks of the Ayr and the Doon, was not disposed to admire the barren sublimity of the Bruar, and accordingly wrote his "Humble Petition," in which the water requests the umbrage of birch and hazel from the hands of the noble proprietor.

"Let lofty firs and ashes cool,
My lowly banks o'erspread,
And view, deep-bending in the pool,
Their shadows' wat'ry bed!

"Let fragrant birks in woodbines dress
My craggy cliffs adorn;
And, for the little songster's nest,
The close embow'ring thorn."

This was almost the only wish which the Poet ever uttered that any pains were taken to gratify. The banks of the Bruar are now clothed as he prescribed—the trouts are sheltered from the sun by the over-hanging boughs—the songster's nest is to be seen in its season,

"And birks extend their fragrant arms
To screen the dear embrace."

Burns hastened his departure from Blair; two of his biographers express regret at this. Had he remained, they observe, but a few days, he would have met Lord Melville, who had the chief management of the internal affairs of Scotland, and who "might not improbably have been induced to bestow that consideration on the claims of the Poet which, in the absence of any personal acquaintance, Burns' works ought to have received at his hands." Lord Melville admired, with the Poet, woman's beauty, wine's allurements, and rough intrepidity of conversation: there were no other links to unite them. It was more to the purpose that Burns, at the table of Athole, made the acquaintance of Graham of Fintry, who has the merit of doing the little that was done for him in the way of patronage.

Historic and poetic scenes—spots where battles had been fought and songs sung, were most in request with Burns. On quitting Blair he shaped his course towards the Spey, and followed the stream. The straths he found rich, the mountains wild and magnificent. He saw Rothemurche and the gloomy forests of Glenmore, and, passing rapidly through Strathspey, halted an hour at a wild inn, and visited Sir James Grant, whose lady he pronounces a sweet and pleasant body. "I passed," said he to his brother Gilbert, "through a wild country, among cliffs grey with eternal snows and glens gloomy and savage." He came upon the Findhorn "in mist and darkness," visited Castle-Cawdor, where Macbeth murdered Duncan, saw the bed in which tradition says the

king was stabbed; hurried on to Fort-George, and thence to Inverness. He took a hurried look at Loch Ness with its wild braes, and the General's Hut; visited Urquhart Castle, with its fine strath; and was so rapt at the Falls of Fyers that he broke out into verse.

Short as the Poet's stay was in Inverness, he found leisure to admire the classic capital of the eastern Highlands. The ladies, with their snooded hair and simple elegance of dress; the jail, which was pronounced unable to retain a prisoner who belonged to a clan; the fort, raised during the days of Cromwell to keep the land in awe; and the beautiful Hill of Fairies, near the river side, claimed by tradition as the grave of Thomas the Rhymer, were not looked upon without emotion and remark. On leaving Inverness he passed over Culoden Moor, a place calculated to awaken sad reflections. On that heath, so fatal to the hopes of our ancient line of princes—a heath desolate and blasted, and only relieved in its brown barrenness by the green mounds raised over the bones of the brave—the Poet paused, and was long lost in thought; the fruit of his meditations was a lyric, which cannot easily be equalled for simplicity and pathos:—

"The lovely lass o' Inverness,
Nae joy nor pleasure can she see;
For e'en an' morn she cries, alas!
And ay the saut tear blins her eo.
Drumossie moor, Drumossie day,—
A wae fu' day it was to me!
For there I lost my father dear—
My father dear, and brethren three."

The Poet reached Kilravock in time for breakfast; his record of this halt is short, but to the point:—"Old Mrs. Rose: sterling sense, warm heart, strong passions, and honest pride, all in an uncommon degree. Mrs. Rose, jun., a little milder than the mother; this, perhaps, owing to her being younger. Mrs. Rose and Mr. Grant accompany us to Kildrummie. Two young ladies: Miss Rose, who sung two Gaelic songs, beautiful and lovely; Miss Sophia Brodie, most agreeable and amiable; both of them gentle, mild; the sweetest creatures on earth—and happiness be with them!" Of this visit the Poet had long a grateful recollection: "There was something in my reception at Kilravock," he says, in a letter to Mrs. Rose, "so different from the cold, obsequious, dancing-school bow of politeness, that it almost got into my head that friendship had occupied her ground without the intermediate march of acquaintance. I wish I could transcribe, or rather transfuse, into language, the glow of my heart. My ready fancy, with colours more mellow than life itself, painted the beautifully wild scenery of Kilravock—the venerable grandeur of the castle—the spreading woods—the winding river, gladly leaving his unsightly, heathy source, lingering with apparent delight as he passed the Fairy-

Walk at the foot of the garden—your late distressful anxieties—your present enjoyments—your dear little angel, the pride of your hopes—my aged friend, venerable in worth and years, whose loyalty and other virtues will strongly entitle her to the support of the Almighty Spirit here, and His peculiar favour in a happier state of existence. You cannot imagine, madam, how much such feelings delight me; they are the dearest proofs of my own immortality."

Burns, it would appear by a letter from Mrs. Rose, had been hurried from her fire-side by the importunities of Nicol; the two friends now continued their journey in a colder mood; the diary was sadly neglected. It affords, however, sundry touches of character:—"Dine at Nairn: fall in with a pleasant enough gentleman—Dr. Stewart, who had been abroad with his father in the 'Forty-Five'; and Mr. Falconer, a spare, irascible, warm-hearted Norlan and a non-juror." He passed by Kinloss, where Edward the First halted in his conquering march, intimidated as much by wild woods and savage hills as by the warlike people. He admired in Elgin the remains of Scotland's noblest cathedral, and examined at Forres the enormous slab of grey stone, in shape resembling a sword-blade, erected as a monument of peace between Sweno of Denmark, and Malcolm II. Something like sculptures on the sides, antiquarians aver, intimate a drawn battle and a treaty of peace.—"Mr. Brodie tells me," says the Poet, "that the moor where Shakspeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still haunted, and that the country folk won't pass it by night." * * * * "Venerable ruins of Elgin Abbey—a grander effect at first glance than Melrose, but not near so beautiful."

On reaching Fochabers, the Poet left his companion at an inn, and went to pay his respects to the Duke and Duchess of Gordon, to whose splendid mansion the village is as a suburb.—"He was received," says Currie, "with the utmost hospitality and kindness; and, the family being about to sit down to dinner, he was invited to take his place at table as a matter of course. This invitation he accepted, and after drinking a few glasses of wine he rose up, and proposed to withdraw. On being pressed to stay, he mentioned, for the first time, his engagement with his fellow-traveller; and, his noble host offering to send a servant to conduct Mr. Nicol to the castle, Burns insisted on undertaking that office himself: he was, however, accompanied by a gentleman, a particular acquaintance of the Duke, by whom the invitation was delivered in all the forms of politeness." They found Nicol in a foaming passion: in vain the Poet soothed, explained, expostulated; he refused all apology, and kept striding up and down the streets of Fochabers, cursing the postillions for not yoking the horses and hurrying him away. Burns, it is said, eyed the irascible

pedagogue for a moment, as if deciding whether he should confront him with fury equal to his own, or quietly seat himself in his own nook of the chaise and proceed southward. He chose the latter alternative, and turned his back on Castle-Gordon with a vexation he sought not to conceal.

["This incident," Lockhart justly remarks, "may serve to suggest some of the annoyances to which persons moving, like our poet, on the debateable land between two different ranks of society, must ever be subjected. To play the lion under such circumstances must be difficult at best; but a delicate business, indeed, when the jackalls are presumptions. This pedant could not stomach the superior success of his friend—and yet, alas for poor human nature! he certainly was one of the most enthusiastic of his admirers, and one of the most affectionate of all his intimates." "The abridgment of Burns's visit to Gordon Castle was not only," says Walker, "a mortifying disappointment, but in all probability a serious misfortune; as a longer stay among persons of such influence might have begot a permanent intimacy, and on their parts an active concern for his future advancement." "I shall certainly," says the Poet, in a letter to Mr James Hoy, Gordon Castle, "among my legacies, leave my latest curse on that unlucky predicament which hurried—tore me away from Castle Gordon. May that obstinate son of Latin prose (Nicol) be cursed to Scotch mile periods, and damned to seven league paragraphs; while Declension and Conjugation, Gender, Number, and Time, under the ragged banners of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile array!"

The rough temper of his companion did not, however, prevent him from soliciting the muse for a song in honour of The Gordon; but the muse seems to have been infected with the mood of Nicol; she spoke, but not happily. He says in his journal—"Cross Spey to Fochabers; fine palace, worthy of the generous proprietor. The Duke makes me happier than ever great man did—noble, princely, yet mild, condescending, and affable; gay and kind: the Duchess witty and sensible—God bless them!"

The visit of Burns to Castle-Gordon was not altogether one of curiosity or chance. The Duchess desired to befriend the Poet; she spoke of his merits in the north, and praised his poems in the south, in coteries where their language was dark and mystical. Her friend, Henry Addington, now Viscount Sidmouth, saw in the verses of the rustic bard a spontaneous vigour of expression, and a glowing richness of language, all but rivalling Shakespeare. He talked of them among the titled and enthusiastic, and took pleasure in quoting them to Pitt and to Melville. This was not unknown to the Duchess: she invited him to Castle-Gordon,

and promised him the company of Burns and Beattie. The future premier was unable to accept the invitation; but wrote and forwarded, it is said, these memorable lines—memorable as the first indication of that deep love which England now entertains for the genius of Burns:—

"Yes! pride of Scotia's favoured plains, 'tis thine
The warmest feelings of the heart to move;
To bid it throb with sympathy divine,
To glow with friendship, or to melt with love.

"What though each morning sees thee rise to toil;
Tho' Plenty on thy cot no blessing showers,
Yet Independence cheers thee with her smile,
And Fancy strews thy moorland with her flowers.

"And dost thou blame the impartial will of Heaven,
Untaught of life the good and ill to scan?
To thee the Muse's choicest wreath is given;
To thee the genuine dignity of man:
Then, to the want of worldly gear resign'd,
Be grateful for the wealth of thy exhaustless mind."

Aberdeen the Poet calls a lazy town, contrary to the general opinion of Scotland. Here he met with "Mr. Chalmers, printer, a facetious fellow—Mr. Ross, a fine fellow, like Professor Tytler—Mr. Marshall, one of the *poete minores*—Mr. Sheriffs, author of Jamie and Bess, a little decrepid body with some abilities—Bishop Skinner, a Nonjuror, son of the author of Tullochgorum:—a man," he says, "whose mild venerable manner is the most marked of any in so young a man. Professor Gordon, a good-natured, jolly-looking professor. Near Stonehive, the coast a good deal romantic—meet my relations. James Burness, writer in Stonehive, one of those who love fun, a gill, and a punning joke, and have not a bad heart; his wife, sweet and hospitable, without any affectation of what is called town-breeding." The next day he breakfasted with Mr. Burness, and slept at Lawrence Kirk. Visits the Album library. Mrs. ——— a jolly, frank, sensible, love-inspiring widow. Howe — of the Mearns, a rich, cultivated, but still uninclosed country. After visiting Montrose—that finely situated handsome town, he now directed his steps to Muthie, and inspected the famous caverns on its wild romantic coast; he stopped for an hour to examine Arbroath Abbey; passed through Dundee—"a low-lying but pleasant town,"—and, having examined Broughty Castle, a finely situated ruin, on the banks of the Tay, he went "through the rich harvests and fine hedge-rows of the Carse of Gowrie; along the romantic margin of the Grampian Hills to the fruitful, woody, hilly country which encloses Perth." In going up Strathern he visited the banks of Endermay, fine, fruitful, cultivated Strath, famous in song; then mused awhile on the scene made memorable by the affecting story of "Bessy Bell and Mary Gray;" and, finally, after visiting the fine scenery on the banks of the May, and enjoying

the hospitalities of Mrs. Belcher, whom he describes as "gawdie, frank, affable, fond of rural sports, hunting, &c.," he hurried on to Queensferry, "through a cold, barren country." He parted with the north in a better mood in his last than in his first journey; he had been everywhere, save at Arbruchil, kindly received; chief had vied with chief in doing him honour, and, though he took but some twenty and odd days to this extensive tour, he had seen, observed, and imbibed so much of the mountain spirit as coloured many of his future lyrics. He took farewell of the north in character. On passing the Lowland line he turned about and exclaimed:—

"When death's dark stream I ferry o'er,
A day that surely shall come,
In Heaven itself I'll ask no more
Than just a Highland welcome."

[He arrived once more in Edinburgh on the 16th of September, having travelled near six hundred miles, windings included, in twenty-two days—greatly extended his acquaintance with his own country, and visited some of its most classical scenery—observed something of Highland manners, which must have been as interesting as they were novel to him—and strengthened considerably, among the sturdy Jacobites of the North, those political opinions which he at this period avowed.]

The Poet once more visited his family at Mauchline, where he remained a week or two with his mother, and having looked leisurely over the farms which still awaited his offer on Dalswinton estate, Burns proceeded to Edinburgh for the purpose of arranging his affairs with Creech, a sharp and yet dilatory person. He entertained a hope, too, that some of the leading men of Scotland would find him a task less alien to his feelings than farming, which in those days yielded but a bare subsistence; and as he had been acceptable to them before, he expected to be no less so now, when the world had sanctioned their praise. His bookseller had distant correspondents to consult, and the proceeds of a large edition to calculate; and this was the work of time. The patronage, too, which the Poet anticipated, required leisure; the great must not be pressed with eager solicitude by the poor and the dependant; their deeds of generosity must be allowed to come in their own time and season, and seem the offspring of their own natures.

[It was at this period that his friend Mr. Ainslie says, "The Poet was a considerable time in Edinburgh, visiting Mr. Cruikshanks, then one of the masters of the High School, who lived in St. James's Square, New Town. I had then a small bachelor house on the north side of the square, and, intimate as we were, it may be supposed we spent many an hour together; and, to me, most agreeable they were.

I remember one pleasant summer afternoon, the Poet came over to me after dinner. I was then but a writer to the signet's apprentice, but had already a cellar, though it must be admitted it was no extensive one, for it was no more than a window bunker, and consisted but of five bottles of port—all that remained of a dozen which had been my last laid-in store; but it was excellent, and old, and got from a wine-merchant who favoured me. I was too hospitable not to offer a bottle to my friend, who was one of the finest fellows in the world. What then was to have been expected to happen?—that some nice points would have been discussed—an exercise in which the Poet displayed always great eloquence—and many a fine quotation made, in which he constantly indulged with great fervour; and, lastly, that the poor five bottles of wine might have suffered in the cause, to the great elucidation of all the questions, and the increase of the beauty and sublimity of all the passages quoted. But no such thing. 'No, my friend,' said Burns; giving me at the same time, a kindly slap upon the shoulder, 'we'll hae nae wine the day; to sit dozing in the house on sic a glorious afternoon as this! Besides, ye ken you and I dinna require wine to sharpen our wit, nor its adventurous aid to make us happy. No; we'll tak a walk about Arthur Seat, and come in to a late tea.' We did so; and I almost never forgot the Poet so amusing, so instructive, and altogether so delightful, as he was in the charming stroll which we had together, and during the sober 'tea drinking' which followed it.]

The active spirit of Burns could not be idle; he addressed himself to the two-fold business of love and verse. I have related the success of his poetic homage to Charlotte Hamilton.

In another letter dated November 21st 1787, to the same young lady, he says that he has a heart for friendship, if not for love, and deserves the tender sympathy of the two blooming spinsters. "Charlotte and you are just two favourite resting-places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny, wilderness of this world. God knows I am ill-fitted for the struggle; I glory in being a poet, and want to be thought a wise man; I would fondly be generous, and I desire to be rich. After all, I am afraid, I am a lost subject. Some folk hae a hantle o' fauts, an' I'm but a ne'er-do-weel."

As the correspondence proceeded, Burns was overset in a hackney coach, and one of his legs dangerously bruised. He thinks of Harvieston and the condolence of beauty. "Here I am," he says, "under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion, and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest, evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself, have

formed a quadruple alliance to guarantee the other. I have taken, tooth and nail, to the Bible; it is really a glorious book. I would give my best song to my worst foe, I mean the merit of making it, to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit." Charlotte Hamilton, to whose ear and heart most of these fine things were obliquely addressed, was not to be moved by the muse; she was probably aware of the more than equivocal situation in which the Poet stood with regard to Jean Armour, and she felt a growing regard for Adair, whom Burns had introduced. This, in some measure, accounts for the indifferent success of the Poet, in a matter on which he seems to have set his heart, and also for the destruction of his letters.

On the 19th of the following month we find the Poet again addressing Miss Margaret Chalmers, who was married in the ensuing year to a gentleman named Hay, and who we understand still lives (1840) at Pall, in the Pyrenean district of Berne:—"The atmosphere of my soul is vastly clearer than when I wrote you last. For the first time, yesterday, I crossed the room on crutches. It would do your heart good to see my Bardship, not in my *poetic*, but in my *oaken*, stilts, throwing my best leg with an air! and with as much hilarity in my gait and countenance as a may-frog leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long expected shower. I can't say I am altogether at my ease, when I see anywhere in my path that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre, Poverty, attended, as he always is, by iron-fisted Oppression and peering Contempt. But I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-laboured day, and still my motto is, I DARE! my worst enemy is *moi-même*. There are just two creatures that I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear."^{*}

"[It seems impossible to doubt," says Lockhart, "that Burns had, in fact, lingered in Edinburgh, in the hope that, to use a vague but sufficiently expressive phrase, something would be done for him. He visited and revisited a farm,—talked and wrote scholarly and wisely about 'having a fortune at the plough-tail,' and so forth; but all the while nourished, and assuredly it would have been most strange if he had not, the fond dream that the admiration of

his country would e'er long present itself in some solid and tangible shape. His illness and confinement gave him leisure to concentrate his imagination on the darker side of his prospects; and the letters which we have quoted may teach those who envy the powers and the fame of genius to pause for a moment over the annals of literature, and think what superior capabilities of misery have been, in the great majority of cases, interwoven with the possession of those very talents from which all but their possessors derive unmingled gratification."]

In December 30, 1787, Burns thus addresses his friend Richard Brown, mariner:—"I am just the same will-o'-wisp being I used to be: about the first and fourth quarters of the moon, I generally set in for the trade-wind of wisdom; but about the full and the change I am the luckless victim of mad tornadoes which blow me into chaos. All mighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom, and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow,† who has wit and wisdom more murderously fatal than the assassinating stiletto of the Sicilian banditti, or the poisoned arrow of the savage African. My Highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have gravely removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the verses which she sent me the other day:—

"Talk not of love; it gives me pain:
For love has been my foe;
He bound me with an iron chain,
And plunged me deep in woe!

"But friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was formed to prove,—
There welcome, win, and wear the prize
But never talk of love!

"Your friendship much can make me blest—
O why that bliss destroy?
Why urge the odious one request
You know I must deny!"

This Edinburgh beauty was the Mrs. Mac of the Poet's toasts when the wine circulated—the accomplished Clarinda, to whom, under the name of Sylvander, he addressed so much prose and verse. This "mistress of the Poet's soul and queen of poetesses," could not be otherwise than tolerant in her taste, if she sympathized in the affected strains which he offered at the altar of her beauty. His prose is cumbrous, and his verse laboured: there are, it is true, passages of natural feeling and sentiments sometimes of a high order, but in general his raptures are ar-

* The eloquent hypochondriacism of the concluding passage of his letter called forth the commendation of Francis Jeffrey, now a Lord of Session in Scotland.

† It is remarkable that Burns himself in the above letter, and some of his biographers, allude to Clarinda as being a widow, notwithstanding her husband was then living abroad. The Poet says in one of his letters to her,—"Your person is unapproachable by the laws of your country; and he loves you

not as I do who would make you miserable." And again, he alludes emphatically to a *circumstance*, the occurrence of which would no longer separate them. The matrimonial connexion of this lady had proved, from no fault on her part, unhappy, and she then resided in Edinburgh, with two young children, while her husband was pushing his fortune in Jamaica, where he ultimately became chief clerk of the Court of Common Pleas, and died in 1819.—CHAMBERS.]

tificial and his sensibility assumed. He puts himself into strange postures and picturesque positions, and feels imaginary pains to correspond; he wounds himself, to shew how readily the sores of love can be mended; and flogs his body like a devotee, to obtain the compassion of his patron saint. Nor is this all; in his addresses he is often audaciously bold; he wants tenderness, too, and sometimes taste:—

"In vain would Prudence with her decent sneer,
Point to a censuring world, and bid me fear:
Above that world on wings of love I rise,
I know its worst, and can that worst despise.
Wrong'd, slander'd, shunn'd, unpitied, unredrest,
The mock'd quotation of the scorners' jest,
Let Prudence' direst bodements on me fall—
Clarinda, rich reward I o'erpay them all!"

These lines are sufficiently forward, and could not but be painful to Mrs. M'Lehose, unless she smiled on them as the fantastic effusions of a pastoral platonism. In another part of the same poem he vows,

"By all on high adoring mortals know!
By all the conscious villain fears below!
By your dear self! the last great oath, I swear,
Not life nor soul were ever half so dear,"

to love her while wood grows and water runs, according to the tenure of entailed property.

It is some apology for the Poet, perhaps, that these compositions, which I am unwilling to regard as serious—and which formed, in the opinion of James Grahame, the poet, "a romance of real platonic attachment"—were produced in the painful leisure which a bruised limb afforded him; the lady to whom they were addressed now and then wrote to the crippled Bard, and diverted him with her wit, though she refused to soothe him with her presence. It is true that the poem from which these lines are extracted contains couplets presumptuous and familiar, and asserts that they were commended by his fair correspondent; but this cannot well be believed by those who draw conclusions from the general spirit of the letters. Those who know Clarinda cannot but feel that Burns thought of her when he said, "People of nice sensibility and generous minds have a certain intrinsic dignity which fires at being trifled with or lowered, or even too closely approached."

Yet cheered as he was by beauty, and praised as a poet from "Maidenkirk to John o' Groat's," the poet was anything but happy. "I have a hundred times wished," he says in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, of the 21st of January, 1788, "that one could resign life as an officer resigns his commission; for I would not take in any poor ignorant wretch by selling out. Lately I was a sixpenny private, and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign a starving cadet, a little more conspicuously wretched. I am ashamed of all

this; for, though I do not want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning, as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice."

During the abode of Burns in Edinburgh, Johnson commenced his "Musical Museum," the object of which was to unite the songs and the music of Scotland in one general collection. The proprietor, a man of more enthusiasm than knowledge, inserted in his first volume, published in June, 1787, several airs of at least doubtful origin, and several songs of more than doubtful merit: before he commenced the second volume, he had acquired the help of Burns; indeed, the first bears marks of his hand. "Green grow the Rashes" is an acknowledged production, and "Bonnie Dundee" carries the peculiar impress of his genius:—

"My blessings upon thy sweet wee lippie;
My blessings upon thy bonnie e'e bree!
Thy smiles are sae like my blythe sodger laddie,
Thou's ay be dearer and dearer to me!"

To the second volume, published in February, 1788, Burns contributed the preface, and no less than thirty lyrics. In the former he says, "The songs contained in this volume, both music and poetry, are all of them the work of Scotchmen. Wherever the old words could be recovered, they have been preferred; both as generally suiting better the genius of the tunes, and to preserve the productions of those earlier sons of the Scottish muses. Ignorance and prejudice may, perhaps, affect to sneer at the simplicity of the poetry or music of some of these pieces; but their having been for ages the favourites of nature's judges, the common people, was to the editor a sufficient test of their merit.

Most of the songs which Burns contributed are of great merit. "To the Weavers gin ye go" is the homely song of a country lass who went to warp a web, and forgot her errand: for—

"A bonnie westlin weaver lad
Sat working at his loom,
He took my heart as wi' a net,
In every knot and thrum."

It relates, I have heard, the story of one of his rustic sweethearts. "Whistle an' I'll come to you, my lad" is an imperfect version of one of his happiest songs. The idea is old—and some of the words. The verse which he added will ever be new:—

"Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me;
Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me;
Come down the back stairs, and let naebody see,
And come as ye were na coming to me."

He loved to eke out the old melodies of Caledonia. "I'm o'er young to marry yet" is sung by a very young lady, who upbraids her suitor with a design to carry her from her mother,

and put her into the company of a strange man during the lonely nights of winter. She, however, discovers a remedy :—

"Fu' loud and shrill the frosty wind,
Blaws thro' the leafless timmer, sir;
But if ye come this gate again,
I'll sulder he gin simmer, sir."

"The Birks of Aberfeldy" originated in an old strain called the Birks of Abergeldie, but surpasses it as far as sunshine excels candlelight. The same may be said of "Macpherson's Farewell." Something of the rudiments of this bold rant may be found in old verses of the same name; but they are, in comparison, as barley-chaff is to gold sand. The hero of the song, a musician and noted freebooter, was taken redhand, and hurried to execution. When the rope was round his neck, he sent for his favourite fiddle, played an air, called, after him, Macpherson's Rant, offered the instrument in vain to any one who could play the tune, then broke it over the hangman's head, and flung himself from the ladder. His song is in character, wild, daring, and revengeful :—

"Oh! what is death but parting breath?
On many a bloody plain
I've dared his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again.
Untie these bands from off my lands,
And bring to me my sword,
And there's no man in all Scotland,
But I'll brave him at a word."

The genius of the north had an influence over the Poet's musings in other compositions. In "The Highland Lassie," the lover complains of want of wealth, and the faithlessness of fortune, but, strong in affection, declares,

"For her I'll dare the billows' roar,
For her I'll trace the distant shore,
That Indian wealth may lustre throw
Around my Highland lassie, O."

In "The Northern Lass" he utters similar sentiments: and in "Braw, braw iads of Galla Water," his hand may be traced by the curious in Scottish song; it is too kenspeckle to be denied :—

"Sae fair her hair, sae brent her brow,
Sae bonnie blue her een, my dearie,
Sae white her teeth, sae sweet her mou',
The mair I kiss, she's aye my dearie."

"Stay, my Charmer," if not of Highland extraction, owes its air to the north. There are but eight lines; but he excelled in saying much in small compass :—

"By my love so ill requited:
By the faith you fondly plighted,
By the pang of lovers alighted,
Do not, do not leave me so!"

To a jacobite feeling we owe that fine strain "Strathallan's Lament." "This air," says the

Poet, "is the composition of one of the worthiest and best men living, Allan Masterton. As he and I were both sprouts of jacobitism, we agreed to dedicate the words and air to that cause." The song is supposed to be the "Goodnight" of James Drummond, Viscount of Strathallan, who escaped to France from Culloden. Even in the days of Burns, the language which the exile is made to utter could not but be unacceptable to many :—

"In the cause of right engaged,
Wrongs injurious to redress,
Honour's war we strongly waged,
But the heavens denied success."

The amended songs are numerous. In his hastiest touches there is something always which no hand but that of Burns could communicate. "How long and dreary is the night!" is mostly his; the last verse will go to many hearts :—

"How slow ye move, ye heavy hours,
As ye were wae and wearie!
It was nae sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie."

The hoary wooer in "To daunt me," is sketched with all the scornful spirit of a lady who has set her heart on a younger person :—

"He hirls twa-fold as he drow,
Wi' his teethless gab and his auld beld pow,
And the rain dreeps down frae his red-bleer'd ee,
That auld man shall never daunt me."

In "Bonnie Peggie Alison," the Poet indulges in such license of language as may startle the fastidious; yet it is but the rapture of an enthusiastic heart :—

"When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure,
I seek nae mair o' Heaven to share
Than sic a moment's pleasure."

"The Dusty Miller" exhibits a few of his happy emendations. A young woman, in remembering the attractions of a lover who wins a shilling before he spends a groat, sings with arch simplicity—

"Dusty was the coat,
Dusty was the colour,
Dusty was the kiss
I got frae the miller."

He withheld his name from "Theniel Menzies' bonny Mary." The buoyancy of the language, and the natural truth of the delineation must be felt by all who know what lyric composition is :—

"Her een aae bright, her brow sae white,
Her haffet locks as brown 's a berry,
And aye they dimpl'd wi' a smile,
The rosy cheeks o' bonny Mary."

"The Banks of the Devon," "Raving winds around her blowing," "Musing on the

roaring ocean," "A rose-bud by my early walk," and "Where braving angry Winter's storms," were all published in the Poet's name. In the first, he paid homage to the charms of Charlotte Hamilton; and in the latter, to the gentle and winning graces of Margaret Chalmers. These are more finished and equal, yet scarcely so happy as some of the hasty and perhaps inconsiderate snatches with which he eked out the fragmentary strains of the old minstrels.

That his heart was much with this sort of work, we may gather from his letter to Mrs. Rose of Kilravock, Feb. 17th 1788:—"I am assisting a friend in a collection of Scottish songs set to their proper tunes. Every air worth preserving is to be included. Among others, I have given 'Morag,' and some few Highland airs which pleased me most, a dress which will be more generally known, though far inferior in real merit." He wrote to his friends—east, west, north, and south, for airs and verses for the Museum. From his old comrade M'Candlish he begged "Pompey's Ghost," by the unfortunate Lowe—from Skinner of Linshart—from Dr. Blacklock he entreated communications; and he drew upon his own memory for some of those antique strains, picked up from the singing of his mother, or the maidens of Ayr-shire.

To those who charge Burns with idleness or dissipation during this winter in Edinburgh, many will think thirty songs an answer sufficient, without taking into consideration his maimed limb, and his numerous letters to Clarinda. He had other matters, too, on his mind; I have said that he exhibited early symptoms of jacobitism: his Highland tours and conversations with the chiefs and ladies of the north strengthened a liking which he seems to have inherited from his fathers. On the 31st of December previous, he was present at a meeting to celebrate the birth-day of the last of the race of our native princes, the unfortunate Charles Edward: he acted the part of laureate on the occasion, and recited an ode, lamenting the past, sympathizing in the present, and prophesying retribution for the future. Like almost all the verse for which Burns taxed his spirit, the ode is cumbrous and inflated; neither the fiery impetuosity of Graham, nor the calm intrepidity of Balmerino inspired him—

"Ye honoured mighty dead!

Who nobly perished in the glorious cause,

Your king, your country, and your laws:

From great Dundee, who, smiling, victory led,

And fell a martyr in her arms;

What breast of northern ice but warms

To bold Balmerino's undying name?

Whose soul of fire, lighted at Heaven's high flame,

Deserves the proudest wreath departed heroes claim!"

Who were the Poet's associates at this anniversary no one has told us. The white rose of jacobitism was worn in those days by many people of rank and condition: it was the symbol of all who regretted that Scotland had ceased to be a separate kingdom, had lost the dignity of her parliament, the honours of her monarchy, and was compelled to send her children into another land to represent her interests, where they were exposed to the scoffs and insults of a proud and haughty people. This was the jacobitism of Burns; though he sung of the woes of Drumossie, and the sufferings of Prince Charles, he had no desire to see the ancient line restored, and the Hanoverian dynasty expelled, since he knew that every step towards the throne would be on a bloody course. His heart clung to the immediate descendants of Bruce, and it is probable that he never studied the mystery of a constitution which, to secure our freedom, raised a prince to the throne who could neither speak our language, nor comprehend the genius of the people. His whole affections were concentrated on his native land: his whole object was to do it honour: for this he sacrificed his time; to this he dedicated his genius; and on this, though poor, he laid out some of the little wealth he had. He saw with sorrow that the dust of Fergusson, the poet, lay among the ignoble dead, and desired to raise a memorial, such as might guide the steps of the lovers of Scottish song to the grave of his brother bard. This humble wish was graciously granted by the authorities of the Canongate kirk, and he raised a monumental stone, which is still to be seen among the thick-piled grave-stones of the burial-ground. A communication from Delhi informs me that the price paid by the Poet was 5*l.*, and that the work was executed by Mr. Burn, father of the present distinguished architect.*

That Burns could write so many songs is to be marvelled at, when we reflect that, during most of the time, a sort of civil war existed between him and his bookseller, of which many symptoms are visible in his printed and manuscript correspondence.—"I have broke measures," he says, "with Creech, and last week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me, upon

* The sum paid was £5 10, as appears from the following extract of an original letter, in Burns's hand-writing, now in the possession of Geo. H. King, Esq., of Glasgow. To Mr. Peter Hill, Bookseller, Edinburgh.—*Dumfries, February 5th, 1792.*—My dear friend, I send you by the bearer, Mr. Clark, a particular friend of mine, six pounds and a shilling, which you will dispose of as follows:—five pounds ten shillings, per account, I owe to Mr. Robert Burn, Architect,

for erecting the stone over the grave of poor Fergusson. He was two years in erecting it, after I had commissioned him for it; and I have been two years in paying him, after he sent me his account; so he and I are quits. He had the hardiess to ask me interest on the sum, but, considering the money was due by one poet for putting a tombstone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank Heaven that he ever saw a farthing of it. R. B.]

his honour, that I should have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor, damned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonizing sensibility, and bedlam passions!

'I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to die.'

I have this moment got a hint—I fear I am something like undone; but I hope for the best. Come stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution; accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! You must not desert me! Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope. Seriously, though, life at present presents me with but a melancholy path; but my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on."

These expressions refer to whispers which had reached his ear about the solvency of Creech, and are contained in a letter to Margaret Chalmers: the conduct of his bookseller dwelt long on his mind; we find him, sometime afterwards, thus writing to Dr. Moore.—"I cannot boast about Creech's ingenuous dealing; he kept me hanging on about Edinburgh from the 7th of August, 1787, until the 13th of April, 1788, before he would condescend to give me a statement of affairs; nor had I got it even then, but for an angry letter I wrote him, which irritated his pride. I could not a 'tale,' but a detail, 'unfold;' but what am I that I should speak against the Lord's anointed bailie of Edinburgh! I give you this information, but I give it to yourself only, for I am still much in the gentleman's mercy. Perhaps I injure the man in the idea I am sometimes tempted to have of him—God forbid I should! A little time will try, for in a month I shall go to town to wind up the business, if possible." That Creech, after long evasion, behaved honourably and liberally to the impatient Poet is well enough known to the world; I record these complaints to vindicate the latter from the charge of having loitered needlessly in Edinburgh, and refrained from putting the ploughshare in the ground which was offered for his acceptance.

"His publisher's accounts," says Lockhart, "when they were at last made out, must have given the impatient author a very agreeable surprise; for, in his letter to Lord Glencairn, we find him expressing his hopes that the gross

profits of his book might amount to 'better than £200;' whereas, on the day of settling with Mr. Creech, he found himself in possession of £500, if not of £600."*

Burns now set seriously about considering his future prospects. Having settled with Creech, he wrote to Mr. Miller that he would accept his offer with regard to the farm; he lent two hundred pounds to his brother Gilbert, to enable him to mend himself in the world and support his mother, whom he tenderly loved; and, with five hundred pounds in his pocket, he resolved to unite himself to Jean Armour, carry her to the banks of the Nith, and follow the plough and the muses. What he had seen and endured in Edinburgh, during his second visit, admonished him regarding the reed on which he leant, when he hoped for a place of profit and honour from the aristocracy on account of his genius. On his first appearance the doors of the nobility opened spontaneous, "on golden hinges turning," and he ate spiced meats and drank rare wines, interchanging nods and smiles with "high dukes and mighty earls." A colder reception awaited his second coming; the doors of lords and ladies opened with a tardy courtesy; he was received with a cold and measured stateliness, was seldom requested to stop, seldom to repeat his visit; and one of his companions used to relate with what indignant feeling the Poet recounted his fruitless calls and his uncordial receptions in the good town of Edinburgh. That he had high hopes is well known; there were not wanting friends to whisper that lordly, nay, royal, patronage was certain; nor were such expectations at all unreasonable,—but genius is not the passport to patronage; he was allied to no noble family, and could not come forward under the shelter of a golden wing; he was unconnected with any party which could pretend to political influence, and who had power either to retard or forward a ministerial measure; moreover, he was one of those "whim-inspired" persons of whom he sings in his inimitable "Bard's Epitaph:"—

"Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool."

His case was, therefore, next to hopeless; he asked for nothing, and nothing was offered, though men of rank and power were aware that he was unfitted with an aim in life—that poetry alone could not sustain him, and that he must go back to the flail and the furrow. He went to Edinburgh, strong in the belief that

[* Nicol, the most intimate friend of Burns, writes to Mr. John Searns, excise-officer of Dumfries, immediately on hearing of the poet's death. "He certainly told me that he received, £600 for the first Edinburgh edition, and £100 afterwards for the copyright." Dr. Currie states the gross profit of Creech's edition at £500, and Burns himself, in one of his letters, at £400 only. Nicol hints that Burns had contracted debts while in Edinburgh, which he might not wish to avow on all occasions; and if we are to believe

this, which is probable, and that the expense of printing the subscription edition should, moreover, be deducted from the £700 stated by Nicol, the apparent contradictions in these statements may be pretty nearly reconciled. There appears to be reason for thinking that Creech subsequently paid more than £100 for the copyright. If he did not, how came Burns to realise, as Currie states, "nearly nine hundred pounds in all by his poems?" LOCKHART.]

genius such as his would raise him in society; but he came not back without a sourness of spirit and a bitterness of feeling.

The pride of Burns, which was great, would not allow him to complain, and his ambition, which was still greater, hindered him from regarding his condition as yet hopeless. When he complained at all, he did not make his moan to man; his letters to his companions or his friends are sometimes stern, fierce, and full of defiance; he uttered his lament in the ear of woman, and seemed to be soothed with her attention and her sympathy.—“When I must escape into a corner,” he says bitterly to Mrs. Dunlop, “lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim, What merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule and the key of riches in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world the sport of folly or the victim of pride? I have read somewhere of a monarch who was so out of humour with the Ptolomean system of astronomy that he said, had he been of the Creator’s council, he could have saved him a great deal of labour and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Prince’s-street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a perspective. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb—sinews of many of his Majesty’s liege subjects, in the way of tossing the head and tip-toe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow, or making way to a great man, and that, too, within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence, or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature himself requires; as a measuring glance at his towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.” The condition of the Poet made, we fear, such bitter reflections matters of frequent occurrence. The learned authors—and Edinburgh swarmed with them—claimed rank above the inspired clod of the valley; the gentry asserted such superiority, as their natural inheritance; the nobility held their elevation by act of parliament or the grace of majesty; and none of them were prepared to accept the brotherhood of one who held the patent of his honours immediately from nature.

In the course of the winter Burns resolved, since no better might be, to unite the farmer

with the poet; some one persuaded him that to both he could join the gauger. So soon as this possessed his fancy, he determined to beg the humble boon from his patrons, and, as no one seemed more likely to be kind than the Earl of Glencairn, he addressed him anxiously:—“I have weighed—long and seriously weighed—my situation. I wish to get into the excise: I am told your lordship’s interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners; and your lordship’s patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruction. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial.” What the earl did in this matter is unknown; his conduct seems to have satisfied Burns, for at his death, which soon followed, he poured out a poetic lament full of the most touching sensibility.

The Excise commission came in an unlooked-for way. While Burns was laid up with his crushed limb, he was attended by Alexander Wood, surgeon, a gentleman still affectionately remembered as “kind old Sandy Wood.” To him the Poet had mentioned his desire to obtain a situation in the Excise. Wood went to work, and so bestirred himself that Graham of Fintray put his name on the roll of Excisemen at once. The Poet, who, like the hero of his own inimitable song, was

“Contented wi’ little, and cantie wi’ mair,”

communicated this stroke of what he called good fortune to Margaret Chalmers in these words:—“I have entered into the Excise. I go to the west for about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks’ instructions.”

[The following is the letter of instructions given, by the Board of Excise, to the worthy individual under whom Burns was trained for the duties of his new office:—

“Mr. James Findlay, Officer, Tarbolton.

“The Commissioners order, That you instruct the Bearer, Mr. Robert Burns, in the Art of Gauging, and practical Dry gauging Casks and Utensils; and that you fit him for surveying Victuallers, Rectifiers, Chandlers, Tanners, Tawers, Maltsters, &c.; and when he has kept books regularly for Six Weeks at least, and drawn true Vouchers, and Abstracts therefrom, (which Books, Vouchers, and Abstracts must be signed by your Supervisor and yourself, as well as the said Mr. Robert Burns,) and sent to the Commissioners at his expense; and when he is furnished with proper instruments, and well instructed and qualified for an Officer, then (and not before, at your perils) you and your Supervisor are to certify the same to the Board, ex-

pressing particularly therein the date of this letter; and that the above Mr. Robert Burns hath cleared his Quarters, both for Lodging and Diet; that he has actually paid each of you for his Instructions and Examination; and that he has sufficient at the Time to purchase a Horse for his Business.

I am, your humble Servant,

"A. PEARSON."

'EXCISE OFFICE,
"EDINBURGH, 31ST MARCH, 1788."]

"I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of fortune's palace shall we enter in, but what doors does she open for us. I was not likely to get anything to do. I got this without hanging-on or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread, and, though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life."

Nor did he withhold the tidings of his appointment from Mrs. Dunlop:—"I thought thirty-five pounds a year no bad *dernier resort* for a poor poet, if Fortune, in her jade tricks, should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up." Gauger is a word of mean sound, nor is the calling a popular one; yet the situation is neither so humble, nor the emoluments so trifling, as some of the Poet's southern admirers have supposed. A gauger's income in those days, on the banks of Nith, was equal to three hundred a year at present in London; an excise officer is the companion of gentlemen; he is usually a well-informed person, and altogether fifty per cent. above the ordinary excise officers on the banks of the Thames. It is true that Burns sometimes speaks with levity of his situation, but that is no proof of his contempt for it; he loved in verse to hover between jest and earnest; and, if he thought peevishly about it at all, it was in comparison of a place such as his genius merited. Having secured the excise appointment, and, on the 13th of March, 1788, bargained with Mr. Miller of Dalswinton for the farm of Ellisland, in Nithsdale, he resolved to bid Edinburgh farewell.

The Poet, it is said, visited the graves of Ramsay and Fergusson, then took leave of some friends—the Earl of Glencairn was one—by letter, and waited upon others: among the latter were Blair, Stewart, Tytler, Mackenzie, and Blacklock. I have heard that his reception was not so cordial as formerly; it would seem that his free way of speaking and free way of living had touched them somewhat. That Burns wrote joyous letters, uttered unguarded speeches when the wine-cup went round, and was now and then to be found in the company of writers' clerks, country lairds, and west country farmers, is very true, and could not well be otherwise. He was educated in a less courtly school than professors and di-

vine: mechanics and farmers had been his associates from his cradle. The language of a farmer's fire-side is less polished and more natural than that of the college; he spoke the language of a different class of people, and he kept their company because he was one of them. Genius had ranked him with the highest; but it was the pleasure of fortune or his country to keep him at the plough. The man who got his education in the furrowed field—whose eloquence sprung from the barn and the forge,

"When ploughmen gather with their graith,"

and who wrote not classic verse, but "hamely western jingle," could not by any possibility please, by his conversation or his way of life, the polished, the polite, and the fastidious. That Burns appeared fierce and rude in their eyes is as true as that they seemed to him "white curd of asses' milk,"—learnedly dull and hypocritically courteous.

It was not unknown to the literati, and the lords of Edinburgh, that Burns kept a memorandum-book, in which he not only noted down his Border and his Highland tours, but introduced full length portraits of all the eminent persons whom he chanced to meet or with whom he associated.

"As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh," he says, "a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr. Palgrave, 'half a word fixed upon or near the spot is worth a cart-load of recollection.' I don't know how it is with the world in general; but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure: I want some one to laugh with me; some one to be grave with me; some one to please me, and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and, at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

"For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confidant. I will sketch every character, that any way strikes me, to the best

of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes and take down remarks in the old law-phrase, without feud or favour. Where I hit on any thing clever, my own applause will, in some measure, feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever. My own private story likewise, my love adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted."

"How perpetually," says Lockhart, "Burns was alive to the dread of being looked down upon as a man, even by those who most zealously applauded the works of his genius, might perhaps be traced through the whole sequence of his letters. When writing to men of high station, at least, he preserves, in every instance, the attitude of self-defence. But it is only in his own secret tables that we have the fibres of his heart laid bare, and the cancer of this jealousy is seen distinctly at its painful work."

"There are few," continues the Poet, "of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received every where, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due*; he meets at a great man's table a Squire Something, or a Sir Somebody; he knows the noble landlord, at heart, gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes beyond perhaps any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eight-penny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice, that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty? The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself) that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him; though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues."

Burns kept this formidable book so little of a secret that he allowed a visitor sometimes to take a look at his gallery of portraits, and, as he distributed light and shade with equal freedom and force, it was soon bruited abroad

that the Poet had drawn stern likenesses of his chief friends and benefactors. This book is not now to be found; it was carried away from the Poet's lodgings by one of his visitors, who refused to restore it—enlisted in the artillery—sailed for Gibraltar, and died about the year 1800. From what remain, the following characters are extracted; they make us regret the loss of the rest:—

"With Dr. Blair I am more at my ease; I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare—or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called liking. When he neglects me for the mere carcase of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, what do I care for him or his pomp either? It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one, but, in my opinion, Dr. Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts, like his, are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintance; but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first, the very first, rank, in prose; even in poetry, a bard of nature's making can alone take the *pas* of him. He has a heart not of the very finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short he is truly a worthy and most respectable character."

Other characters were sketched with still greater freedom. Here is his satiric portrait of a celebrated lawyer:—

"He clench'd his pamphlets in his fist,
He quoted an' he hinted,
Till in a declamation-mist
His argument he tint [lost] it;
He graped for't, he gaped for't,
He found it was awa', man;
But what his common-sense came short,
He eked it out wi' law, man."

The above portrait of the Lord Advocate is admirable for breadth and character: the following of Harry Erskine is not so happy. He was a wit, a punster, and a poet; and one of the most companionable, intelligent, and eloquent men of his time:—

"Collected Harry stood a wee,
Then open'd out his arm, man;
His lordship sat, wi' ruefu' e'e,
And ey'd the gathering storm, man:
Like wind-driv'n hail, it did assail,
Or torrents owre a linn, man;
The Bench sae wise, lift up their eyes,
Half-waken'd wi' the din, man."

The literati of Edinburgh were not displeased, it is likely, when he went away; nor were the titled part of the community without their share in this silent rejoicing; his presence was a reproach to them. "The illustrious of his native

land, from whom he looked for patronage," had proved that they had the carcass of greatness, but wanted the soul: they subscribed for his poems, and looked on their generosity as "an alms could keep a god alive." He turned his back on Edinburgh, and from that time forward scarcely counted that man his friend who spoke of titled persons in his presence. Whilst sailing on pleasure's sea in a gilded barge, with perfumed and lordly company, he was, in the midst of his enjoyment, thrown roughly overboard, and had to swim to a barren shore, or sink for ever.

Burns now turned his steps westward. In one of his desponding moods he had lately said to a correspondent, "There are just two creatures that I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe; the one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear." In the same mingled spirit of despair and pleasure he complains—"I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of imagination, whim, caprice and passion; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence, and forethought, move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and, alas! frequent defeat." The thoughts of home, of a settled purpose in life, gave him a silent gladness of heart, such as he had never before known; and, to use his own words, he moved homeward with as much hilarity in his gait and countenance "as a May-frog, leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long-expected shower." He reached Mauchline towards the close of April: he was not a moment too soon; the intercourse which, in his visits to Ayr-shire, he had renewed with Jean Armour, exposed her once more to the reproaches of her family;—she might say, in the affecting words of one whose company had brought both joy and woe—

"My father put me frae his door,
My friends they hae disown'd me a';
But I hae ane will take my part—
The bonnie lad that's far awa."

On his arrival he took her by the hand, and was re-married according to the simple and effectual form of the laws of Scotland:—"Daddie Auld," and his friends of the Old-light, felt every wish to be moderate with one whose powers of derision had been already proved. He next introduced Mrs. Burns to his friends, both in person and by letter. Much of his correspondence of this period bears evidence of the peace of mind and gladness of heart which this two-fold act of love and generosity had brought to him.

To Mrs. Dunlop, he says, "Your surmise, Madam, is just; I am indeed a husband. I

found a once much-loved, and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements; but I enabled her to purchase a shelter:—there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery. The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health, and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than commonly handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the Scriptures, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding. To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger: my preservative from the first is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honour, and her attachment to me; my antidote against the last is my long and deep-rooted affection for her. In housewife matters—in aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress; and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy, and other rural business. The Muses must not be offended when I tell them the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas*; but, I assure them, their ladyships will ever come next in place. You are right that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unimistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number."

On the same interesting topic he writes to Margaret Chalmers:—"Shortly after my last return to Ayr-shire, I married my Jean. This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance, perhaps; but I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit; nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and kindest heart in the country. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit*, *et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the scriptures, and the Psalms of David, in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose, or verse. I must except also from this last a certain late publication of Scots poems which she has perused very devoutly; and all the ballads in the country, as she has (Oh! the partial lover, you will cry, the finest "wood-note wild" I ever heard. I am the more particular in this lady's character as I know she will henceforth have the honour of a share in your best wishes."

These letters, and others in the same strain, have misled Walker into the belief that Burns married Jean Armour from a sentiment of duty rather than a feeling of love; no belief can be more imaginary. The unfortunate story of his affection had been told to the world both in prose and verse; he was looked upon as one deserted by the object of his regard, under circumstances alike extraordinary and painful. That he forgave her for the sad requital of his love, and her relations for their severity, and sought her hand and their alliance, required something like apology to his friends. I see nothing in these matters out of harmony with affection and love.—“That he originally loved his Jean,” says the Professor, “is not to be doubted; but, on considering all the circumstances of the case, it may be presumed that, when he first proposed marriage, it was partly from a desire to repair the injury of her reputation, and that his distress, on her refusal, proceeded as much from wounded pride as from disappointed love.” The best answer to this is afforded by the words of the Poet. He loved her, he never had ceased to love her; he considered her sacrifice of him as made to the pious feelings and authority of her father:—“I can have no nearer idea,” he says, “of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her, and I do still love her to distraction after all.” If this is not the language of ardent love, I know not what it means.

But the Professor seems desirous of proving that this change in the Poet's affections was the necessary result of being exposed to the allurements of the high-bred dames of Edinburgh.—“The three years that succeeded,” he observes, “had opened to him a new scene: and the female society to which they had introduced him was of a description altogether different from any which he had formerly known.”—“Between the man of rustic life,” said Burns to some one after his arrival in Edinburgh, “and the polite world, I observed little difference. In the former, though unpolished by fashion, and unenlightened by science, I had found much observation and much intelligence. But a refined and accomplished woman was a being altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea.” It is plain that the Poet, when he uttered these words, was close at the ear of one of those “high-exalted courteous dames” and making himself acceptable to her by flattery and by eloquence. It is also evident that the Professor's notions of love were not at all poetic. To regulate our affections according as knowledge raises woman in the scale is paying a very pretty compliment to education; but it is most unjust to nature. True love pays no regard to such distinctions. We see a form—we see a

face, which awaken emotions within us never before felt. The form is not perhaps the most perfect, nor the face the most fair, in the land; yet we persist in admiring—in loving them:—in short, we have found out, by the free-masonry of feeling, the help-mate which Heaven designed for us, and we woo and win our object.

But in what were the ladies of the polished circles of the land superior to a well-favoured, well-formed, well-bred lass of low degree, who had a light foot for a dance, a melodious voice for a song, two witching eyes, with wit at will, and who believed the man who loved her to be the greatest genius in the world? These are captivating qualities to all, save those who weigh the merits of a woman in a golden balance. Nay, in the very thing on which the Professor imagines a high and polished dame to be strong, she will be found weak. The shepherd maidens and rustic lasses of Scotland feel, from their unsophisticated state of mind, the beauty of the poetry of Burns deeply and devoutly; for once that a song of his is heard in the lighted hall, it is heard fifty times on the brook-banks and in the pastoral valleys of the land.

His marriage reconciled the Poet to his wife's kindred: there was no wedding-portion. Armour was a most respectable man, but not opulent. He gave his daughter some small store of plenishing; and, exerting his skill as a mason, wrought his already eminent son-in-law a handsome punch-bowl in Inverary marble, which Burns lived to fill often, to the great pleasure both of himself and his friends. To make bridal presents is a practice of long standing in Scotland; and it is to the credit of the personal character of the Poet that he was not forgotten. Mrs. Dunlop bethought her of Ellisland, and gave a beautiful heifer:—another friend contributed a plough. The young couple, from a love of country, ordered their furniture—plain, indeed, and homely—from Morison, a wright in Mauchline: the farm servants, male and female, were hired in Ayr-shire, a matter of questionable prudence; for the mode of cultivation is different from that of the west, and the cold humid bottom of Moss-giel bears no resemblance to the warm and stony loam of Ellisland.

PART III.—ELLISLAND.

In the month of May, 1788, Burns made his appearance as a farmer in Nithsdale; his fame had flown before him, and his coming was expected. Ellisland is beautifully situated on the south side of the Nith, some six miles above Dumfries; it joins the grounds of Friars-Carse on the north-west—the estate of Isle towards the south-east—the great road from Glasgow separates it from the hills of Dun-score; while the Nith, a pure stream running

over the purest gravel, divides it from the holms and groves of Dalswinton. The farm amounts to upwards of a hundred acres, and is part holm and part croft-land; the former, a deep rich loam, bears fine tall crops of wheat; the latter, though two-thirds loam and one-third stones on a bottom of gravel, yields, when carefully cultivated, good crops, both of potatoes and corn; yet to a stranger the soil must have looked unpromising or barren; and Burns declared, after a shower had fallen on a field of new-sown and new-rolled barley, that it looked like a paved street!

Though he got possession of the farm in May, the rent did not commence till Martinmas, as the ground was uninclosed and the houses unbuilt. By the agreement, Miller granted to Burns four nineteen years' leases of Ellisland, at an annual rent for the first three years of fifty pounds, and seventy pounds for the remaining seventy-three years of the tack; the Poet undertook, for a sum not exceeding three hundred pounds, to build a complete farm onstead, consisting of dwelling-house, barn, byre, stable, and sheds, and to permit the proprietor to plant with forest trees the scaur or precipitous bank along the side of the Nith, and a belt of ground towards Friars-Carse, of not more than two acres, in order to shelter the farm from the sweep of the north-west wind. Burns was assisted in the choice of the farm, and the terms on which it was taken, by Tennant of Glenconner, one of his Ayr-shire friends: there were other farms to be let of a superior kind on the estate, and those were pointed out by my father, steward to the proprietor—a Lothian farmer of skill and experience—but the fine romantic look of Ellisland induced Burns to shut his eyes on the low-lying and fertile Foregirth; upon which my father said, “Mr. Burns, you have made a poet’s—not a farmer’s—choice.”

I was very young when I first saw Burns. He came to see my father; and their conversation turned partly on farming, partly on poetry, in both of which my father had taste and skill. Burns had just come to Nithsdale; and I think he appeared a shade more swarthy than he does in Nasmyth’s picture, and at least ten years older than he really was at the time. His face was deeply marked with thought, and the habitual expression intensely melancholy. His frame was very muscular and well proportioned, though he had a short neck, and something of a ploughman’s stoop: he was strong, and proud of his strength. I saw him one evening match himself with a number of masons; and out of five-and-twenty practised hands, the most vigorous young men in the parish, there was only one that could lift the same weight as Burns.

He had a very manly face, and a very melan-

choly look; but on the coming of those he esteemed, his looks brightened up, and his whole face beamed with affection and genius. His voice was very musical. I once heard him read *Tam O’Shanter*.—I think I hear him now. His fine manly voice followed all the undulations of the sense, and expressed, as well as his genius had done, the pathos of humour, the horrible and the awful, of that wonderful performance. As a man feels, so will he write; and in proportion as he sympathizes with his author, so will he read him with grace and effect.

I said that Burns and my father conversed about poetry and farming. The Poet had newly taken possession of his farm of Ellisland,—the masons were busy building,—the applause of the world was with him, and a little of its money in his pocket,—in short, he had found a resting-place at last. He spoke with great delight about the excellence of his farm, and particularly about the beauty of its situation. “Yes,” my father said, “the walks on the river banks are fine, and you will see from your windows some miles on the Nith; but you will also see farms of fine rich holm,* any one of which you might have had. You have made a poet’s choice, rather than a farmer’s.”

If Burns had much of a farmer’s skill, he had little of a farmer’s prudence and economy. I once inquired of James Corrie, a sagacious old farmer, whose ground matched with Ellisland, the cause of the Poet’s failure. “Faith,” said he, “how could he miss but fail, when his servants ate the bread as fast as it was baked? I don’t mean figuratively, I mean literally. Consider a little: at that time close economy was necessary to have enabled a man to clear twenty pounds a year by Ellisland. Now, Burns’ own handy work was out of the question; he neither ploughed, nor sowed, nor reaped, at least like a hard-working farmer; and then he had a bevy of servants from Ayr-shire. The lasses did nothing but bake bread, and the lads sat by the fire-side, and ate it warm, with ale. Waste of time and consumption of food would soon reach to twenty pounds a year.”

“The truth of the case is, that, if Robert Burns liked his farm, it was more for the beauty of its situation than for the labours which it required. He was too wayward to attend to the stated duties of a husbandman, and too impatient to wait till the ground returned in gain the cultivation he bestowed upon it. During the prosperity of his farm, my father often said that Burns conducted himself wisely, and like one anxious for his name as a man, and his fame as a poet. He went to Dunscore kirk on Sundays, though he expressed oftener than once his dislike to the stern Calvinism of that strict old divine, Mr. Kirkpatrick;—he assisted in forming a reading club, and at weddings, and house-

* Holm is that rich meadow-land, intervening between a

stream and the general elevation of the adjoining country.

heatings, and kirns,* and other scenes of festivity, he was a welcome guest, universally liked by the young and the old.

["The situation in which Burns now found himself," says Currie, "was calculated to awaken reflection. The different steps he had of late taken were in their nature highly important, and might be said to have, in some measure, fixed his destiny. He had become a husband and a father; he had engaged in the management of a considerable farm, a difficult and laborious undertaking; in his success the happiness of his family was involved; it was time, therefore, to abandon the gaiety and dissipation of which he had been too much enamoured; to ponder seriously on the past, and to form virtuous resolutions respecting the future. That such was actually the state of his mind, the following extract from his common-place book may bear witness:—

'ELLISLAND, SUNDAY, 14TH JUNE, 1788.

"This is now the third day that I have been in this country. 'Lord, what is man!' What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas, and fancies! And what a capricious kind of existence he has here! *** There is indeed an elsewhere, where, as Thomson says '*virtue sole survives*.'

'Tell us, ye dead;
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
—A little time
Will make us wise as you are, and as close.'

"I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's Adam, gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace.

"But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream, till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half-sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, the water is naught and the ground barren, and nothing short of a supernaturally-gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

"Wedlock, the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be anything with me but names, was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on, in my present situation it was absolutely necessary. Humanity,

generosity, honest pride of character, justice to my own happiness for after life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on *her* part to repent it. I can fancy how, but have never seen where, I could have made a better choice. Come, then; let me act up to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young—

On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man!"

"Under the impulse of these reflections, Burns immediately engaged in rebuilding the dwelling-house on his farm, which, in the state he found it, was inadequate to the accommodation of his family. On this occasion, he himself resumed at times the occupation of a labourer, and found neither his strength nor his skill impaired. Pleased with surveying the grounds he was about to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building that should give shelter to his wife and children, and, as he fondly hoped, to his own grey hairs, sentiments of independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic content and peace rose on his imagination; and a few days passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest, which he had ever experienced.^[†]"

The Poet was now a busy and a happy man. He had houses to build, and grounds to enclose:—that he might be near both, he sought shelter in a low smoky hovel on the skirts of his farm. I remember the house well: the floor was of clay, the rafters were jappanned with soot: the smoke from a hearth fire streamed thickly out at door and window, while the sunshine which struggled in at those apertures produced a sort of twilight. There he was to be found by all who had curiosity or taste, with a table, books, and drawings before him; sometimes writing letters about the land, and the people, among whom he had dropt like a slung stone; sometimes giving audience to workmen who were busy at dyking or digging foundations; and not unfrequently brushing up, as Mrs. Burns was wont to say, an old song for Johnson's Musical Museum.—"The hovel which I shelter in," said the Poet to Margaret Chalmers, "is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to ex-

initials, in many a fond and fanciful shape, where they still remain, interspersed with such *morceaux* as the following:—

"An honest woman's the noblest work of God."

Poor fellow!—His own noble spirit was at rest with itself and all the world at this time.]

* *Kirns*.—The harvest-home dances in Scotland. Such entertainments were always given by the landlords in those days; but this good old fashion is fast wearing out. It belonged to a more prudent, as well as humane, style of manners than now finds favour.

[† Burns, in his happy days at Ellisland, had scrawled on the windows, with his diamond, his own and his wife's

pect, but I believe in time it may be a saving bargain."

If Burns had little comfort in his lodging-place, he seems to have been unfortunate in finding society to render it endurable.—"I am here," he says, on the 9th of September, "on my farm busy with my harvest; but for all that pleasurable part of life called social communication, I am at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose they only know in graces, prayers, &c.; and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiding-webs—by the ell! As for the Muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet. For my own capricious, but good-natured hussey of a muse—

'By banks of Nith I sat and wept,
When Coila I thought on;
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow trees upon.'

I am generally about half my time in Ayr-shire with my 'darling Jean'; and then I, at lucid intervals, throw my horny fist across my beebowbed lyre, much in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning-wheel." In the same strain—half serious and half-humorous—he thus addresses his friend Hugh Parker:—

"In this strange land, this uncouth clime,
A land unknown to prose or rhyme;
Where words ne'er cross the Muse's heekles,
Nor limpit in poetic shackles;
A land that prose did never view it,
Except, when drunk, he stacher't through it.
Here, ambush'd by the chimla cheek,
Hi! in an atmosphere of reek,
I hear a wheel thrum i' the neuk,
I hear it—for in vain I leuk.—
The red peat gleams a fiery kernal
Enhusked by a fog infernal:
Here, for my wonted rhyming raptures,
I sit and count my sins by chapters:
For life and spunk, like ither Christians,
I'm dwindled down to mere existence,
Nae converse but wi' Gallowa' bodies,
Wi' nae ken'd face but—Jenny Geddes."

Nor did his neighbours gain on him by a closer acquaintance. "I was yesterday," he writes to Mrs. Dunlop, "at Mr. Miller's, to dinner for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind—from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, impromptu. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present: my suffrage, as a professional man, was expected; I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, independence of spirit and integrity of soul! In the course of the conversation, Johnson's Musical Museum, a collection of Scottish songs, with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning:—

'Raving winds around her blowing.'

The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words—"Mine, madam; they are, indeed, my very best verses." She took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well—"King's chaff is better than other folk's corn." I was going to make a New Testament quotation about 'casting pearls;' but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste."

The sooty shealing in which the Poet found refuge seems to have infected his whole atmosphere of thought; the Maxwells, the Kirk-patricks, and Dalzells were fit companions for any man in Scotland in point of courtesy and information, and they were almost his neighbours; Riddell, of Friars-Carse, an accomplished antiquarian, lived next door; and Jean Lindsay, and her husband Patrick Miller, were no ordinary people. The former was beautiful and accomplished; wrote easy and graceful verses, and had a natural dignity in her manners which became her station; the latter was one of the most remarkable men of his time; an improver and inventor, and the first who applied steam to the purposes of navigation. Burns was resolved to be discontented—at least on paper—for in his conversation he exhibited no symptoms of the kind; but talked, laughed, jested, and visited, with the ease and air of a man happy and full of hope.

The walls of the Poet's onstead began now to be visible from the North side of the Nith, and the rising structures were visited by all who were desirous of seeing how he wished to house himself. The plans were simple: the barn seemed too small for the extent of the farm, and the house for the accommodation of a large family. It contained an ample kitchen, which was to serve for dining room; a room to hold two beds, a closet to hold one, and a garret, coom-ceiled, to contain others for the female servants. One of the windows looked down the holms, another opened on the river, and the house stood so nigh the lofty bank that its afternoon shadow fell across the stream upon the opposite fields. The garden was a little way from the house; a pretty footpath led southward along the river side; another ran northward, affording fine views of the Nith, and of the groves of Friars-Carse and Dalswinton; while, half way down the steep declivity, a fine, clear, cool spring supplied water to the household. The situation was picturesque, and at the same time convenient for the purposes of the farm.

During the progress of the work, Burns was often to be found walking among the men, urging them on, and eyeing with an anxious look the tedious process of uniting lime and stone. On laying the foundation he took off his hat, and asked a blessing on the home

which was to shelter his household gods. I inquired of the man who told me this, if Burns did not put forth his hand and help him in the progress of the work?—"Ay, that he did mony a time. If he saw us like to be beat wi' a big stane he would cry, 'bide a wee!' and come rinnin'. We soon found out when he put to his hand—he beat a' I ever met for a dour lift." When the walls rose as high as the window-heads, he sent a note into Dumfries ordering wood for the interior lintels. Twenty carpenters flocked round the messenger, all eager to look at the Poet's hand-writing. In such touches the admiration of the country is well expressed.

These days have been numbered by Currie among the golden days of Burns. Few of his days were golden, and most of them were full of trouble; but his period of truest happiness seems to have been that which preceded and followed the first Edinburgh edition of his poems. Those were, it is true, days of feverish enjoyment; but the tide of his fortune, or at least of his hopes, was at the full. The way before him was all sunshine; and, as his ambition was equal to his genius, he indulged in splendid visions of fame and glory. The neglect of the Scottish nobles rebuked his spirit; he came to Dumfries-shire a saddened and dissatisfied man; he saw that his bread must be gained by the sweat of his brow; that the original curse, from which men without a moiety of his intellect were relieved, had fallen heavy upon him; and that he must plod labour's dull weary round, like an ox in a threshing-mill. The happiness present to his fancy now, was less bright and ethereal than before; he had to hope for heavy crops, rising markets, and fortunate bargains. At a harvest-home or penny-wedding he might expect to have his health drunk, and hear one of his songs sung; but this was not enough to satisfy ambition such as his. Among the rising walls of his onstead, he

"Cheep'd like some bewilder'd chicken,
Scar'd frae its munnie and the cleckin
By hoodie craw."

and complained to Mrs. Dunlop of the uncouth cares and novel plans which hourly insulted his awkward ignorance. These uncouth cares were the labours of a farm, and the novel plans were the intricate and laborious elegancies of a plain onstead!

I have heard my father allege that Burns looked like a man restless and of unsettled purpose.—"He was ever on the move," said he, "on foot or on horseback. In the course of a single day he might be seen holding the plough, angling in the river, sauntering, with his hands behind his back, on the banks, looking at the running water, of which he was very fond. walking round his buildings, or

over his fields; and, if you lost sight of him for an hour, perhaps you might see him returning from Friars-Carse, or spurring his horse through the Nith to spend an evening in some distant place, with such friends as chance threw in his way." The account which he gave of himself is much to the same purpose.—"There is," said he, "a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, which makes the dreary objects seem larger than life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side, by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence, when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind."

He loved to complain:—"My increasing cares," he says, "in this as yet strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children—I could indulge these reflections, till my humour should ferment in the most acid chagrin, that would corrode the very thread of life." These are the sentiments of one resolved not to be comforted.—"The heart of the man and the fancy of the poet are the two grand considerations," he observed, "for which I live. If miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my immortal soul, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods, and picking up grubs, not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards—creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time." To Margaret Chalmers he writes in a mood a shade or so brighter:—

"ELLISLAND, SEPTEMBER, 14TH, 1788.

"I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and, as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much à l'égard de moi, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest of human kind—unfortunate even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost anybody I meet with in eight years; when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child. If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert. I am secure against that crushing grasp of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a late important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities which, however overlooked in fashionable license, or varnished in fashion-

able phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLANY." After this we are scarcely prepared for his saying, "you will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle éclat, and bind every day after my reapers."

The domestic sketch of one great master has been completed by the hand of another: Sir Egerton Brydges thus relates an interview which he had with Burns on the banks of the Nith:—"I had always been a great admirer of his genius and of many traits in his character; and I was aware that he was a person moody and somewhat difficult to deal with. I was resolved to keep in full consideration the irritability of his position in society. About a mile from his residence, on a bench, under a tree, I passed a figure, which from the engraved portraits of him I did not doubt was the Poet; but I did not venture to address him. On arriving at his humble cottage, Mrs. Burns opened the door; she was the plain sort of humble woman she has been described; she ushered me into a neat apartment, and said that she would send for Burns, who was gone for a walk. In about half an hour he came, and my conjecture proved right: he was the person I had seen on the bench by the road-side. At first I was not entirely pleased with his countenance. I thought it had a sort of capricious jealousy, as if he was half inclined to treat me as an intruder. I resolved to bear it, and try if I could humour him. I let him choose his turn of conversation, but said a few words about the friend whose letter I had brought to him. It was now about four in the afternoon of an autumn day. While we were talking, Mrs. Burns, as if accustomed to entertain visitors in this way, brought in a bottle of Scotch whiskey, and set the table. I accepted this hospitality. I could not help observing the curious glance with which he watched me at the entrance of this signal of homely entertainment. He was satisfied; he filled our glasses. "Here's a health to auld Caledonia!" The fire sparkled in his eye, and mine sympathetically met his. He shook my hand with warmth, and we were friends at once. Then he drank "Erin for ever!" and the tear of delight burst from his eye. The fountain of his mind and his heart now opened at once, and flowed with abundant force almost till midnight. He had amazing acuteness of intellect, as well as glow of sentiment. I do not deny that he said some absurd things, and many coarse ones, and that his knowledge was very irregular, and sometimes too presumptuous, and that he did not endure contradiction with sufficient patience. His pride, and perhaps his vanity, was even morbid. I carefully avoided topics in which he could not take an active part. Of literary gossip he knew nothing, and therefore I kept aloof from it; in the technical parts of literature his opinions were crude and uninformed:

but whenever he spoke of a great writer whom he had read, his taste was generally sound. To a few minor writers he gave more credit than they deserved. His great beauty was his manly strength, and his energy and elevation of thought and feeling. He had always a full mind, and all flowed from a genuine spring. I never conversed with a man who appeared to be more warmly impressed with the beauties of nature; and visions of female beauty and tenderness seemed to transport him. He did not merely appear to be a poet at casual intervals; but at every moment a poetical enthusiasm seemed to beat in his veins, and he lived all his days the inward, if not the outward, life of a poet. I thought I perceived in Burns's cheek the symptoms of an energy which had been pushed too far; and he had this feeling himself. Every now and then he spoke of the grave as soon about to close over him. His dark eye had at first a character of sternness; but as he became warmed, though this did not entirely melt away it was mingled with changes of extreme softness."

Between the farm of Ellisland and the village of Mauchline lies a dreary road, forty-six miles long; and along this not very romantic path Burns was in the habit of riding more frequently than was for the advantage of his pocket or his farm. It is true that it was Mrs. Burns who made him look to the west, and it is also true that a man should love and honour his wife; but it seems not to have occurred to the Poet that strict economy—a vigilant look-out upon his farming operations—was the most substantial way of paying respect to her. His jaunts were frequent; he tarried long, and there were pleasant lingerings by the way—brought about by inclination sometimes, and sometimes by wind and rain. All this was much to be regretted, and it arose mainly from want of a residence for Mrs. Burns and his children near the farm which he superintended. He complains to Ainslie of want of time. He was not one of those who could sit quietly and let matters take their course: he had all the impatience of genius, and not a little of its irritability.

In one of his excursions to Ayr-shire, he found the inn at which he usually got a night's lodging filled with mourners conveying the body of a lady of some note in the west to her family tomb; he was obliged to ride ten miles to another inn. The fruit of his vexation was an ode lavish of insult:—

"Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation, mark
Who in widowed weeds appears,
Laden with unhonoured years.
Note that eye—'tis rheum o'erflows—
Pity's flood there never rose:
See those hands, ne'er stretched to save;
Hands that took, but never gave."

In these words, and others bitterer still, the Poet avenged himself on the memory of a frugal and respectable lady, whose body unconsciously deprived him of a night's sleep.

Some will like better, some worse, the reproof which he gave to Kirkpatrick, the minister of Dunscore, for preaching down "the bloody and tyrannical house of Stuart." The Poet went to the Parish church to join in acknowledgements for the Revolution to which we are indebted for civil and religious rights. The stern and uncompromising divine touched the yet lingering jacobitical prejudices of Burns so sharply, that he seemed ready to start from his seat and leave the church.

On going home he wrote thus to the London Star:—"Bred and educated in revolution principles—the principles of reason and common sense—it could not be any silly prejudice which made my heart revolt at the abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman threatened the house of Stuart. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps, as much as their crime, to be the author of those evils. The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation, and the rights of subjects. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the jostling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but, happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there. Let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton, and particularly every Scotchman, who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers."

The eloquent humanity of this appeal was thrown away, perhaps, upon an intrepid Calvinist, to whom the good things of this world were as dust in the balance compared with what he deemed his duty to God and his conscience.—"You must have heard," says Burns in a letter to Nicol, "how Lawson of Kirkmahoe, seconded by Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate Heron of Kirkgunzeon, that, in ordaining Neilson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he feloniously and treasonably bound him to the Confession of Faith, as far as it was agreeable to reason and the word of God." The Poet was un-

fortunate in his respect for those Galloway apostles: for worth and true nobleness of mind, Lawson and Kirkpatrick were as high above them as Criffel is above Solway. He was wayward, and scarcely to be trusted in his arguments on religious topics:—a Cameronian boasted to me how effectually Burns interposed between him and two members of the established kirk, who were crushing him with a charge of heresy.—"The Poet," said he, "proved the established kirk to be schismatic, and the poor broken remnant to be the true light. Never believe me if he wasna a gude man!"

A secluded walk, or a solitary ride, were to Burns what the lonely room and evening lamp are said to be to others who woo the muse. Though sharp and sarcastic in his correspondence, he was kindly and obliging in other matters. He had formed a friendship with the family of Friars-Carse, and was indulged with a key which admitted him when he pleased to the beautiful grounds—to the rare collections of antique crosses, troughs, altars, and other inscribed stones of Scotland's elder day—and to, what the Poet did not leveless, a beautiful hermitage, in the centre of the grove next to Ellisland. He rewarded this indulgence by writing an inscription. At first the poem was all contained on one pane of glass; but his fancy overflowed such limits —

"Thou whom chance may hither lead;
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deck'd in silken stole,
Grave these maxims on thy soul:
Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine every hour;
Fear not clouds will always lour.

Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide!
Quod the Beadsman of Nithside."

These sentiments show the colour of the Poet's mind rather than its original vigour. He was happier in a poem addressed to Graham of Fintry; it is rich in observation, and abounds with vivid pictures, some of them darkening into the stern and the sarcastic:—

"Thee, Nature! partial Nature! I arraign;
Of thy caprice maternal I complain.
Thou giv'st the ass his hide, the snail his shell,
Th' envenom'd wasp, victorious, guards his cell;
Toads with their poison, doctors with their drug,
The priest and hedge-hog in their robes are snug.
But, oh! thou bitter step-mother, and hard
To thy poor fenceless naked child—the Bard!
A thing unteachable in worldly skill,
And half an idiot, too—more helpless still;
No nerves olfactory, Mammon's trusty cur,
Clad in rich Dullness' comfortable fur,
In naked feeling, and in aching pride,
He bears the unbroken blast on every side;
Vampyre booksellers drain him to the heart,
And scorpion critics cureless venom dart.

Critics!—appall'd I venture on the name;
Those cut-throat bandits in the paths of fame,
Bloody dissectors, worse than ten Munroes!
He hacks to teach—they mangle to expose."

The fine satire and graceful application of these lines make us regret that they were addressed to one who had nothing better in his gift than situations in the Excise.

In lyrical verse the muse of Burns was at this time somewhat sparing of her inspiration; she who loved to sing of rustic happiness in her own country tongue was put out in her musings by the sound of mason's hammers and carpenters' saws. The first of his attempts is the exquisite song called "The Chevalier's Lament;" it was partly composed on horseback, on the 30th of March previous.—"Yesterday," he says to Robert Cleghorn, "as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless moors, between Galloway and Ayr-shire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and your favourite air, 'Captain O'Keane,' coming at length into my head, I tried these words to it:—

"The small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,
The murmuring streamlet winds clear through the vale,
The hawthorn-tree blows in the dew of the morning,
And wild scatter'd crowsills bedeck the green dale;
But what can give pleasure, or what can seem fair,
While the lingering moments are numbered by care?
No flowers gaily springing, nor birds sweetly singing,
Can soothe the sad bosom of joyless despair."

He contributed some dozen songs or so this season to Johnson:—"I can easily see that you will very probably," he says, "have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country, and I am certain posterity will look upon themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. I see every day new musical publications advertised, but what are they?—gaudy butterflies of a day: but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of time." Of the new songs which he wrote, "Beware of bonnie Ann" was the first; Ann, the daughter of Allan Masterton, was the heroine.—"The Gardener wi' his Paidle" is another; the first verse is natural and flowing:—

"When rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck the gay green spreading bowers,
Then busy, busy are his hours,
The gardener wi' his paidle.
The chrystal waters gently fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round him blow,
The gardener wi' his paidle."

"On a Bank of Flowers" was written by desire of Johnson, to replace a song of greater merit, but less delicacy, published by Ramsay. "The day returns, my bosom burn," was composed in compliment to the bridal-day of the

laird of Friars-Carse and his lady; it is very beautiful:—

"The day returns, my bosom burns,
The blisful day we twa did meet;
Though winter wild in tempest toil'd,
Ne'er simmer sun was half sae sweet."

"At their fire-side," says the Poet, "I have enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in this country put together." "Go fetch to me a pint o' wine" Burns introduced to his brother Gilbert as an old song which he had found among the glens of Nithsdale, and asked if he did not think it beautiful.—"Beautiful!" said Gilbert; "it is not only that, but the most heroic of lyrics. Ah, Robert! if you would write oftener that way, your fame would be surer." He also copied it out as a work of the olden muse, to Mrs. Dunlop; the second verse is magnificent:—

"The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are rank'd ready;
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody:
But it's not the roar o' sea or shore
Wad make me longer wish to tarry,
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar—
It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary."

He was fond of passing off his own compositions as the labours of forgotten bards. "Auld lang syne" he spoke of to Mrs. Dunlop as a song that had often thrilled through his soul: nor did he hesitate to recommend it to Thomson as a lyric of other days which had never been in print, nor even in manuscript, till he took it down from an old woman's singing. Many a Scottish heart will respond in far lands to the following lines:—

"We twa hae run about the braes,
An' pou'd the gowans fine,
But we've wandered mony a weary foot
Since auld lang syne.
We twa hae paidle i' the burn
Frae morning sun till dine,
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Since auld lang syne."

The desponding spirit of the Poet is visible in the song of "The lazy Mist."—"I'll never wish to hear it sung again," said a farmer to me once; "it is enough to make one quit plough-hilts and harrow, and turn hermit." "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw" is as cheerful as the other is sorrowful.—"I composed it," said the Poet, out of compliment to Mrs. Burns:—it was," he archly adds, "during the honey-moon." This was the fruit of one of his horseback meditations, when riding to Moss-giel from Ellisland, with his rising onstead, his new-sown crop, and the charms of Jean Armour's company in his mind. He made it by the way, and sung it to his wife when he arrived. There are four verses altogether; two of them are not commonly printed, though both are beautiful:—

"O blaw ye westlin' winds, blaw saft
 Among the leafy trees,
 Wi' balmy gale frae hill an' dale,
 Bring hame the laden bees;
 And bring the lassie back to me
 That's aye sae neat an' clean;
 Ae smile o' her wou'd banish care,
 Sae charming is my Jean."

These verses with which Burns eked out and amended the old lyrics are worthy of notice. There is some happy patching in "Tibbie Dunbar:"—

"I care na thy daddie, his lands and his money;
 I care na thy kindred sae high and sae lordly;
 But say thou wilt hae me, for better for waur,
 And come in thy coatie, sweet Tibbie Dunbar."

In "The Tailor fell thro' the bed, thimble an' a'," and in "Ay waukin, O," are two or three of the Burns' touches. In "My Love she's but a lassie yet" his hand is more visible:—

"My love she's but a lassie yet,
 My love she's but a lassie yet;
 We'll let her stand a year or twa.
 She'll no be half sae saucy yet;
 I rue the day I sought her, O,
 I rue the day I sought her, O;
 Wha gets her need na say he's wooed,
 But he may say he's bought her, O."

Having cut and secured his crop, seen his stable for holding four horses, and his byre for containing ten cows, erected, and his dwelling house rendered nearly habitable, he went into Ayr-shire in the middle of November; and, in the first week of the succeeding month, returned with Mrs. Burns, and some cart-loads of plenishing to Ellisland. He was visited on this occasion by many of his neighbours: the glad some looks and the kindly manners of his young wife made a favourable impression on all; and at his house-heating, "Luck to the roof-tree of the house of Burns!" was drunk by the men, and some of his songs sung by the lasses of Nithsdale. He was looked upon now as having struck root as a poet and a farmer, and, as both, was welcome to the people of the vale around. Yet his coming brought something like alarm to a few: the ruder part of the peasantry dreaded being pickled and preserved in sarcastic verse. An old farmer told me that, at a penny-pay wedding, when one or two wild young fellows began to quarrel and threatened to fight, Burns rose up and said, "Sit down and be damned to you! else I'll hing ye up like potatoe-bogles, in sang to-morrow."—"They ceased and sat down," said my informant, "as if their noses had been bleeding."

In the letters and verses of the Poet at this period, we can see a picture of his mind and feelings.—In a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, dated January 1, 1789, he writes:—"This, dear Madam, is a morning of wishes,

and would to God that I came under the apostle James's description—the *prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. In that case, Madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings; every thing that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little of a presbyterian that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery. This day—New Year's day—the first Sunday in May; a breezy, blue-skied noon, sometime about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of autumn; these, time out of mind, have been to me a kind of holiday. I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the Spectator, 'The Vision of Mirza;' a piece that struck my young fancy, before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: 'On the fifth day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer.' We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls; so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast make no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the fox-glove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never heard the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident, or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave." Thus eloquently could Burns discourse upon his own emotions; he was willing to accept, as proofs of an immortal spirit within him, the poetic stirrings of his own sensibility.

["Few, it is to be hoped," says the eloquent Lockhart, "can read such things as these without delight; none, surely, that taste the ele-

vated pleasure they are calculated to inspire can turn from them to the well-known issue of Burns's history without being afflicted. It is difficult to imagine anything more beautiful, more noble, than what such a person as Mrs. Dunlop might at this period be supposed to contemplate as the probable tenour of his future life. What fame can bring of happiness he had already tasted; he had overleaped, by the force of his genius, all the painful barriers of society; and there was probably not a man in Scotland who would not have thought himself honoured by seeing Burns under his roof. He had it in his power to place his poetical reputation on a level with the very highest names, by proceeding in the same course of study and exertion which had originally raised him into public notice. Surrounded by an affectionate family; occupied, but not engrossed, by the agricultural labours in which his youth and early manhood had delighted; communing with nature in one of the loveliest districts of his native land; and, from time to time, producing to the world some immortal addition to his verse,—thus advancing in years and in fame, with what respect would not Burns have been thought of! How venerable in the eyes of his contemporaries! How hallowed in those of after generations, would have been the roof of Ellisland, the field on which he 'bound every day after his reapers,' the solemn river by which he delighted to wander! The plain of Bannockburn would hardly have been holier ground."

That Burns imagined he had united the poet, farmer, and exciseman, all happily in his own person, was a dream in which he indulged only during the first season that he occupied Ellisland. When he thought of his bargain with Miller, his natural engagement with the Muse, and of his increasing family, he was not unconscious that he had taxed mind and body to the uppermost: poetry was not then, more than now, a productive commodity, and he could not expect a harvest such as he had reaped in Edinburgh every year. A farm such as his required the closest, nay, most niggardly, economy to make it pay; and he was not, therefore, unwise in leaning to the Excise to help out with a little ready and certain money the deficiencies of his other speculations. As yet, however, his hopes were high, and his spirit untouched—when he said

"Come, firm Resolve, take thou the van,
Thou stalk o' carle-hemp in man;"

he was bracing himself up for the contest. Such fits of thought generally with him ushered in verse. When visions of fame and honest hard-earned independence passed before his sight, Burns slipped out to the "Scaur's red side," and pacing to and fro, indicated, to the humming of some favourite tune, that he was busy

with song. Nay, it was not unusual with him to go out, "attired as minstrels wont to be," with his head uncovered—his ancestor's broad sword buckled to his side; and, traversing the river-bank in the glimpses of the moon, chant in a voice, deep, low, and melodious, the verses which rose on his fancy.

"On the Dalswinton side," says Lockhart, "the river washes lawns and groves; but over against these the bank rises into a red scaur, of considerable height, along the verge of which, where the bare shingle of the precipice all but but overhangs the stream, Burns had his favourite walk, and might now be seen striding alone, early and late, especially when the winds were loud, and the waters below him swollen and turbulent. For he was one of those that enjoy nature most in the more severe of her aspects; and throughout his poetry, for one allusion to the liveliness of spring, or the splendour of summer, it would be easy to point out twenty in which he records the solemn delight with which he contemplated the melancholy grandeur of autumn, or the savage gloom of winter. Indeed, I cannot but think that the result of an exact inquiry into the composition of Burns's poems, would be, that 'his vein,' like that of Milton, flowed most happily 'from the autumnal equinox to the vernal:'—Of Lord Byron, we know that his vein flowed best at midnight; and Burns has himself told us that it was his custom 'to take a gloamin' shot at the Muses.'"

Nith side was a favourite place for study: southward lies a pretty walk among natural clover: northward the bank is rough with briar and birch, while, far below the stream, roughened by the large stones of Fluechar-Ford, may be heard—

"Chafing against the Scaur's red side."

Here, after a fall of rain, the poet loved to walk "listening to the dashing roar," or looking at the river, chafed and agitated, bursting impetuously from the groves of Friar's-Carse against the bridling embankment which fences the low holms of Dalswinton. Thither he walked in his sterner moods, when the world and its ways touched his spirit; and the elder peasants of the vale still shew the point at which he used to pause and look on the red and agitated stream. In one of these moods he produced, "I hae a wife of my ain," a rather indecorous ditty, but full of the character of the man, and breathing of resolution and independence:—

"I hae a wife o' my ain—I'll partake wi' naeboddy;
I'll tak' cuckold frae nane, I'll gie cuckold to naeboddy.
I hae a penny to spend—there, thanks to naeboddy;
I hae naething to lend—I'll borrow frae naeboddy."

"I am naeboddy's lord,—I'll be slave to naeboddy;
I hae a gude braid sword—I'll tak' dunts frae naeboddy.
I'll be merry and free—I'll be sad for naeboddy;
If naeboddy care for me, I'll care for naeboddy."

Burns indulged in the wish to compose a work less desultory, and more the offspring of meditation, than those short and casual pieces which were rather the sport of his vacant hours than the result of settled study and deliberate thought. Something like the *Georgics* of Virgil, a kind of composition for which he was well fitted, both by genius and knowledge, seems to have hovered before his fancy.—“It is a species of writing,” he observed, “entirely new to me, and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation; but, alas! when I read the *Georgics*, and then survey my own powers, ’tis like the idea of a Shetland pony drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter to start for the plate.” These words were addressed to Mrs. Dunlop; he afterwards says to Dr. Moore:—“The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I have no doubt but the knack, the aptitude, to learn the Muses’ trade, is a gift bestowed by Him who forms the secret bias of the soul; but I as firmly believe that excellence in the profession is the fruit of industry, attention, labour, and pains; at least, I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day—a day that may never arrive; but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour.” The critics of those days seem not to have felt that he had already taken a flight above any bard of his time; they regarded the “Address to the Deil,” “The Daisy,” “The Mouse,” and “The Cotter’s Saturday Night,” as “Orient pearls at random strung;” and held that their worth had yet to be decided by future works of more sustained excellence. This seems to have perplexed Burns; such opinions pointed to a school of verse in which he had never studied.

The Poet did not flourish; yet he seems to have done enough to ensure success as a farmer. He held the plough frequently with his own hands; and he loved to lay aside his coat, and with a sowing-sheet slung across his shoulder, stride over the new-turned furrows, and commit his seed-corn to the ground.—While his wife managed the cheese and butter department with something short of West country skill, he attended fairs where grain was sold, and sales where cattle were disposed of; and, though not averse to a merry-making or a dance, he seems neither to have courted nor shunned them.—“Do you come and see me,” he says to Richard Brown. “We must have a social day, and perhaps lengthen it out with half the night before you go again to sea. You are the earliest friend I now have on earth, my brothers excepted; and is not that an endearing circumstance? When you and I first met, we were at a green period of human life. The twig could easily take a bent, but would as

easily return to its former state. You and I not only took a mutual bent, but, by the melancholy, though strong, influence of being both of the family of the unfortunates, we were intertwined with one another in our growth towards advanced age; and blasted by the sacrilegious hand that shall attempt to undo the union!” He loved old friendships to continue, and rejoiced in the happiness of his early companions.

The diffusion of knowledge was a favourite object with Burns; for this he had established his reading and debating-clubs in the west, and in the same spirit he now desired to excite a love of literature among the portioners and peasants of Dunscore. He undertook the management of a small parochial library, and wrote out the rules. His friend, Gordon, a writer, happened to drop in while he was busy with the regulations, and began to criticise the language—a matter on which the bard was sensitive.—“Come, come, sir,” said he, “let me have my rules again. Had I employed a Dumfries lawyer to draw them out, he would have given me bad Latin, worse Greek, and English spoken in the fourteenth century.” Mr. Riddell, of Friar’s-Carse, and other gentlemen, contributed money and books. The library commenced briskly, but soon languished. The Poet could not always be present at the meetings; the subscribers lived far separate; disputes and disunion crept in, and it died away like a flower which fades for want of watering. Burns alludes ironically to the scheme in one of his letters. Wisdom, he averred, might be gained by the mere handling of books. One night, he said, while he presided in the library, a tailor, who lived some mile or so distant, turned over and over the leaves of a folio Hebrew concordance, the gift of a clergyman.—“I advised him,” said Burns, “to bind the book on his back—he did so; and Stitch, in a dozen walks between the library and his own house, acquired as much rational theology as the priest had done by forty years’ perusal of the pages.” Such ironical sallies were not likely to allure subscribers or give knowledge to the ignorant.

[Nevertheless, his letters to the booksellers on the subject of this subscription library do him much honour: his choice of authors, which business was actually left to his discretion, being in the highest degree judicious. Such institutions are now common, indeed almost universal, in the rural districts of Southern Scotland; but it should never be forgotten that Burns was among the first, if not the very first, to set the example. “He was so good,” says Mr. Riddell, “as to take the whole management of this concern: he was treasurer, librarian, and censor, to our little society, who will long have a grateful sense of his public spirit and exertions for their improvement and information.”]

[* Letter to Sir John Sinclair, Bart., in the Statistical

Account of Scotland—Parish of Dunscore.]

Some have hinted that his appointment in the Excise was unfortunate, as it led to the temptations of pleasant company and social excess. There is no situation under the sun free from this; even a farmer is as much exposed to such allurements as any one. The Poet, a good judge in all such matters, looked with a different eye upon it; nor is there anything too romantic in the wish that journeying along the green vales, and among the fine hills of Nithsdale and Galloway, might inspire his muse, and aid him in poetic composition. "I do not know," he said to Ainslie, "if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an Excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. I know not how the word exciseman, or still more opprobrious, gauger, will sound in your ears. I, too, have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject; but a wife and children have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a-year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow, is no bad settlement for a poet. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting serjeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable, audience in the streets of Kilmarnock:—'Gentlemen, for your farther and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown; and, consequently, with us, an honest man has the surest chance for preferment.'"

In the same strain he writes to his friend Blacklock:—

"But what d'ye think, my trusty fier,
I'm turned a gauger.—Peace be here!
Pannassian queans, I fear, I fear,
Ye'll now disdain me!
And then my fifty pounds a-year
Will little gain me.

"Ye glaiket, glesome, dainty damies,
Wha, by Castalia's wimplin' streamies
Loup, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is
'Mang sons o' men.

"I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies;
Ye ken yoursel my heart richt proud is—
I need na vaunt;
But I'll sned besoms—thraw saugh woodies
Before they want."

In these verses we read of the man as well as the poet; he put more of himself into all he wrote than any other poet, ancient or modern.

[* A writer in the Edinburgh Literary Journal for 1829 gives the following lively anecdote:—"It may be readily guessed with what interest I heard, one Thornhill fair-day, that Burns was to visit the market. Boy as I then was, an interest was awakened in me respecting this extraordinary man, which was sufficient, in addition to the ordinary attraction of a village fair, to command my presence in the market. Burns actually entered the fair about twelve; and man, wife, and lass, were all on the outlook for a peep of the Ayrshire ploughman. I carefully dogged him from stand to

"On one occasion, however," says Lockhart, "he takes a higher tone. 'There is a certain stigma,' writes the Poet to Bishop Geddes, 'in the name of exciseman; but I do not intend to borrow honour from my profession;' which may, perhaps, remind the reader of Gibbon's lofty language, on finally quitting the learned and polished circles of London and Paris for his Swiss retirement:—'I am too modest, or too proud, to rate my value by that of my associates.'"

"His farm," says Currie, "no longer occupied the principal part of his care or his thoughts. It was not at Ellisland that he was now in general to be found. Mounted on horseback, this high-minded Poet was pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale, his roving eye wandering over the charms of nature, and muttering his wayward fancies as he moved along." Currie means something like censure in this passage. The Poet had a duty, and an arduous one, to perform; his district reached far and wide; he was ever punctual in his attendance; and, though he might plough and sow, reap and graze Ellisland by deputy, it required his own eyes and hands to superintend the revenue in ten parishes. That he acquitted himself diligently, but gently, in his vocation, there is abundance of proof; against the regular smugglers his looks were stern and his hand was heavy, while to the poor country dealer he was mild and lenient. The Poet and a brother exciseman one day suddenly entered a poor widow's shop in Dunscore, and made a seizure of smuggled tobacco.—"Jenny," said the Poet, "I expected this would be the upshot; here, Lewars, take note of the number of rolls as I count them. Now Jock, did ye ever hear an auld wife numbering her threads before check-reels were invented? Thou's ane, and thou's no ane, and thou's ane a' out—listen." As he handed out the rolls, he went on with his humorous enumeration, but dropping every other roll into Janet's lap. Lewars took the desired note with much gravity, and saw as if he saw not the merciful conduct of his companion. On another occasion, information had been lodged against a widow who kept a small public-house in Thornhill; it was a fair-day—her house was crowded—Burns came suddenly to the back door and said, "Kate, are ye mad?—the supervisor will be in on ye in half an hour!" This merciful hint saved the poor woman from ruin.*

stand, and from door to door. An information had been lodged against a poor widow of the name of Kate Watson, who had ventured to serve a few of her old country friends with a draught of unlicensed ale, and a lacing of whisky on this village jubilee. I saw him enter her door, and anticipated nothing short of an immediate seizure of a certain grey-beard and barrel, which, to my personal knowledge, contained the contraband commodity our bard was in quest of. A nod, accompanied by a significant movement of the forefinger, brought Kate to the door-way entrance, and I was

The muse, as he expected, accompanied Burns in his gauging excursions. He had occasion to be at Lochmaben; Maxwell, then provost of that very small but very ancient borough, was his correspondent:—he was also acquainted with that "worthy veteran in religion and good fellowship, the Reverend Mr. Jeffrey." At the manse of the latter he met "the blue-eyed lass" in his daughter Jean, then a rosy girl of seventeen, with winning manners and laughing blue eyes. The Poet drank tea and spent the evening in the manse; and next morning, greatly to the increase of her blushes, sent her the song which has made her immortal:—

"I gaed a waeifu' gate yestreen,
A gate, I fear, I'll dearly rue;
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,
Twa laughing een o' bonny blue:
She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wil'd,
She charm'd my soul, I wistna how;
But ay the stound, the deadly wound,
Came frae her een sae bonny blue."

In April, he wrote the poem of "The wounded hare:" he has himself described the circumstances under which he composed it, in a letter to his friend Mr. Alexander Cunningham of Edinburgh:—"One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields, sowing some grass seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when all of them have young ones. Indeed there is something in that business of destroying for our sport individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue." His account was confirmed to me by James Thomson, the son of a neighbouring farmer.—"I remember Burns," said he, "weel; I have some cause to mind him—he used to walk in the twilight along the side of the Nith, near the march, between his land and ours. Once I shot at a hare that was busy on our braid; she ran bleeding past Burns: he cursed me and ordered me out of his sight, else he would throw me into the water. I'm told he has written a poem about it."—"Aye, that he has," I replied; "but do you think he could have thrown you into the Nith?"—"Thrown! aye, I'll warrant could he, though I was baith young and strong." He submitted the poem—certainly not one of his best—to Dr. Gregory; the result scared him from consulting in future professional critics.—Burns said, "I believe Dr. Gregory, in his iron justice, is a good man, but he crucifies me: like the devils, I believe and tremble. Such

near enough to hear the following words distinctly uttered:—"Kate, are ye mad? D'ye ken that the supervisor and me will be upon you in the course of forty minutes? Guid-by t' ye at present."—Burns was in the street, and in the midst

criticisms but tend to crush the spirit out of man."

The applause which his next attempt obtained afforded some consolation for such merciless strictures; this was the song, "O! were I on Parnassus' hill;" the heroine was Mrs. Burns; the transition, from the "forked hill" and "fabled fount" of the heathen to a nearer stream and Scottish mount of inspiration, has been much admired.

"O! were I on Parnassus hill!
Or had o' Helicon my fill,
That I might catch poetic skill,
To sing how dear I love thee.
But Nith maun be my muse's well,
My muse maun be thy bonnie sel',
On Corsincon I'll glow'r and spell,
And write how dear I love thee."

He presented the song to Miss Staig, an accomplished young lady of Dumfries, saying, "should the respectful timidity of any one of her lovers deny him power of speech, it would be charitable to teach him, 'O! were I on Parnassus' hill,' so that he might not lie under the double imputation of being neither able 'to sing nor say.'"

The thoughts of Burns had travelled far from Corsincon, and the waters of the Nith, when he wrote "My heart's in the Highlands." The words suit a Gaelic air, and have much of the northern spirit in them:—

"My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a chasing the deer,
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe;
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go!"

Nor were his thoughts at his own fire-side when he penned his humorous and sarcastic ditty, "Whistle o'er the lave o't." Wedded infelicity is the theme of many of our old minstrels:—

"Meg was meek, and Meg was mild,
Bonny Meg was Nature's child—
Wiser men than me's beguil'd;
Whistle o'er the lave o't."

"The Kirk's Alarm," a poem personal and satiric, with gleams of wit and poetry worthy of a subject less local, was the offspring of this season. It was composed at the request of some of his Ayrshire friends, to aid the Rev. Dr. Macgill, against whom the Kirk was directing its thunder for having written a heretical book. The reverend delinquent yielded, and was forgiven—not so the poet: so much more venial is it in devout men's eyes to be guilty of heresy than of satire!

His fancy was now and then fond of "stepping westward;" this is sufficiently indicated in his "Braes o' Ballochmyle," and with deeper

of the crowd, in an instant, and I had access to know that his friendly hint was not neglected. It saved a poor lonely widow from a fine of several pounds."}]

feelings still in his "To Mary in Heaven," written near the close of September, 1789. The circumstances under which the latter lyric was composed pressed painfully on the mind of his wife.—"Robert," she said, "though ill of a cold, had busied himself all day with the shears in the field, and as he had got much of the crop in, was in capital spirits. But when the gloaming came, he grew sad about something—he could not rest. He wandered first up the water-side, and then went to the barn-yard; and I followed him, begging him to come in, as he was ill, and the air was cold and sharp. He always promised, but still remained where he was, striding up and down, and looking at the clear sky, and particularly at a star that shone like another moon. He then threw himself down on some loose sheaves, still continuing to gaze at the star." When he came in he seemed deeply dejected, and sat down and wrote the first verse:—

"Thou ling'ring star, with less'n'ing ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?"

On this touching topic he writes to Mrs. Dunlop:—"Can it be possible that, when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence? When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more to those who knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey unsightly of reptiles, and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I be yet warm in life, seeing and seen—enjoying and enjoyed? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane. What a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it! There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world, against which he so bravely struggled. There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost—my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy, and love." Few wives would interpret these melancholy allusions into happiness for themselves. Mrs. Burns seems to have conducted herself with much gentleness.

These melancholy moods seldom lasted long—and they were generally relieved by verse. Poetry, therefore, had some share in them. Nor was it unnatural, when the world pressed and the cloud descended, for Burns to cheer the present by bright images of the past. Had fortune been more kind, he would have looked less at the Highland-Mary star, and indulged,

probably, in strains of a more enlivening nature. In those days the Poet describes himself as the prey of nervous affections.—"I cannot reason," he says to the same respected lady, "I cannot think; and but to you I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch, who has impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed."

Yet in the same season he wrote his joyous strain, "Willie brewed a peck o' maut." The history of the song involves that of the Poet. Nicol, by the advice of Burns, bought the farm of Laggan in his neighbourhood, and in the autumn vacation came to look after his purchase. Allan Masterton accompanied him, and, summoning the bard, they resolved to have a "house-heating." Nicol furnished the table, Burns produced the song, and Masterton set it to music. All these lyrics, and others of scarcely inferior merit, were printed in the third volume of the Musical Museum. The song called "The banks of the Nith" partakes of the sobriety of verses written to please a friend. In vain the Poet thinks of the Thames flowing proudly to the sea, and of the Nith—

"Where Comyns ance had high command."

His muse will not be satisfied till he gives her license upon another strain—the song of "Tam Glen." Thought flows free, and words "come skelpin' rank and file," in this happy lyric. The heroine has set her heart on honest Tam, and, in spite of the persuasions and bribes of her relations, perseveres in her attachment. Besides his personal qualities, there are other reasons of weight:—

"The last Halloween I was waukin',
My droukit sark-sleeve, as ye ken;
His likeness came up the house staukin'—
The very grey brecks o' Tam Glen."

Burns went to a school in which the master caused his scholars to sing this song. The Poet was hard to please in matters of sentiment, and said, "Children can't do such things, sir; they sing, but it is without feeling."

He had now made the acquaintance and acquired the friendship of some of the chief families of the vale of Nith; the doors of Friars-Carse, Terraughty, Blackwood, Closeburn, Barjarg, Dalswinton, Glenae, Kirkconnel, and Arbigland were opened to receive and to welcome him; nor were those of Drumlanrig shut. The Duke of Queensbury was represented by John M'Murdo, who had taste to appreciate the merits of such a man as Burns. In one of his letters to that gentleman, he says, in his usual characteristic way,—"A poet and a beggar are in so many points of view alike, that one might take them for the same individual character under different designations; were it

not that though, with a trifling poetic license, most poets may be styled beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold, that every beggar is a poet. In one particular, however, they remarkably agree: if you help either the one or the other to the picking of a bone or a mug of ale, they will very willingly repay you with a song. I feel myself indebted to you, in the style of our ballad printers, for 'five excellent new songs.' The enclosed is nearly my newest song, 'The Country Lass,' and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of its excellence. You see, sir, what it is to patronize a poet; 'tis like being a magistrate in a petty borough; you do them the favour to preside at their council for one year, and your name bears the prefatory stigma of bailie for life. With, not the compliments, but the best wishes, the sincerest prayers, of the season for you, that you may see many and happy years with Mrs. M'Murdo and your family—two blessings, by the bye, to which your rank does not by any means entitle you; a loving wife and a fine family being almost the only good things of this life to which the farm-house and cottage have an exclusive right."

In the midst of visits given and received—kindness done by gentlemen, and words of applause, more welcome still, from ladies, Burns was thoughtful and unhappy. From the pursuit of "pension, post, or place," he had withdrawn with embittered feelings to a farm, and now he found that the plough and the sickle failed to give even the rustic abundance he had contemplated. On Ellisland he had expended all his money in the first year of occupation:—in the second year he writes to Provost Maxwell, of Lochmaben,—"My poor distracted mind is so jaded, so torn, so racked, and bedeviled with the task of the superlatively damned—making one guinea do the business of three, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word business, though no less than four letters of my very short surname are in it." He felt, too, that he had laid out his money in vain. He suspected his mistake early. "It will be recollected that he had previously said, 'I do not find my farm the pennyworth I was taught to expect; but I believe in time it may be a saving bargain.'" To Dr. Moore, he afterwards says:—"I have married my Jean, and taken a farm: with the first step, I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse." Still he did not despair; nay, he sometimes saw in imagination the poet-farmer high in the scale of opulence as well as fame.—"I am here in my old way," he writes to Mr. Macauley, "holding the plough, marking the growth of my corn, or the health of my dairy, and at times sauntering by the delightful windings

of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather, or holding an intrigue with the muses, the only gipsies with whom I have now any intercourse."

Burns, in his perpetual perambulations over the moors of Dumfries-shire had every temptation to encounter which bodily fatigue, the blandishments of hosts and hostesses, and the habitual manners of those who acted along with him in the duties of the Excise, could present. He was, moreover, wherever he went, exposed to perils of his own, by the reputation which he had earned, and by his extraordinary powers of entertainment in conversation; and he pleased himself with thinking, in the words of one of his unpublished letters to the Lady Harriot Don (dated Ellisland, December 23rd, 1789), that "one advantage he had in this new business was the knowledge it gave him of the various shades of character in man—consequently assisting him in his trade as a poet."—From the castle to the cottage, every door flew open at his approach; and the old system of hospitality, then flourishing, rendered it difficult for the most soberly inclined guest to rise from any man's board in the same trim that he sat down to it. The farmer, if Burns was seen passing, left his reapers, and trotted by the side of Jenny Geddes, until he could persuade the bard that the day was hot enough to demand an extra libation. If he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled round the ingle; the largest punch-bowl was produced; and

'Be our's this night—who knows what comes to-morrow?'

was the language in every eye in the circle that welcomed him.* The highest gentry of the county, whenever they had especial merriment in view, called in the wit and eloquence of Burns to enliven their carousals.]

The new-year's-day of 1790 wrought a change in his mind, or rather confirmed his worst suspicions: he had now brought two years' crop to the flail, and was thus enabled to weigh the certain past against future hope. We may gather the result from his words to Gilbert:—"I have not, in my present frame of mind, much appetite for exertion in writing: my nerves are in a cursed state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself; it is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go—I'll fight it out and be off with it." Though Ellisland promised

of his serious songs, used often, in his enthusiasm, to accompany the Poet on his professional excursions.

LOCKHART.]

* These particulars are from a letter of David Maculloch, Esq., who being at this period a very young gentleman, a passionate admirer of Burns, and a capital singer of many

before the fourth of the lease was done to be a saving bargain, there is no doubt that at first it was a losing one. The heart had been wrought out of the ground by preceding tenants, and the crops of grass or corn which it yielded to the Poet afforded but a bare return for labour and outlay.

The condition of a farmer in Nithsdale was in those days sufficiently humble; his one-story house had a clay floor; his furniture was made by the hands of a ploughwright; he presided at meals among his children and domestics; performed family worship, "duly even and morn;" and only put on the look of a man of substance when he gave a dinner to a douce neighbour. Out of doors all was rude and slovenly: his plough was the clumsy old Scotch one: his harrows had oftener teeth of wood than of iron; his carts were heavy and low-wheeled—the axles were of wood; he winnowed his corn by means of the wind, between two barn-doors; and he refused to commit his seed to the earth till, seating himself on the ground at mid-day, it gave warmth instead of receiving it. He was too poor to make experiments, and too prejudiced to speculate. He rooted up no bushes, dug up no stones; neither did he drain, or enclose; the dung which he bestowed on the soil was to raise a crop of potatoes: now and then it received a powdering of lime. His crops corresponded with his skill and his implements; they were weak, and only enabled him to pay his rent and lay past a few pounds Scots, annually.

Much of the ground in Nithsdale was leased at seven, ten, and some fields of more than ordinary richness, at fifteen, shillings an acre. The farmer differed little in wealth and condition from the peasants around him. The war, which soon commenced, raised him in the scale of existence; the army and navy consumed much of his produce; for a hundred thousand soldiers, in time of war, require as much provision as two hundred thousand in times of peace. With the demand, the price of corn augmented; the farmer rose on the wings of sudden wealth above his original condition; his house obtained a slated roof and sash windows; carpets were laid on the floors, instruments of music were placed in the parlours; he wore no longer a coat of home-made cloth; he sat no longer at meals among his servants; family devotion was relinquished as a thing unfashionable, and he became a sort of rustic gentleman, who rode a blood-horse, and galloped home on market-nights at the peril of his own neck and to the terror of all humble pedestrians. His sons were educated at college, and went to the bar or got commissions in the army: his daughters changed their linsey-woolsey gowns for others of silk; carried their heads high, and blushed for their relations who were numbered among the wrights, masons, and shoemakers of the land. When a

change like this took place among the farmers of the vale, the dews of wealth would have fallen at the same time on the tenant of Ellisland; but Burns was too poor and too impatient to wait long for better times, he resolved to try another year or two, and then abandon farming for ever, if it refused to bring the wealth to him which it did to others.

Having made this covenant to himself, he resumed his intercourse with the muse, and produced one of the best as well as the longest of all his poems—"Tam O'Shanter." For this noble tale we are indebted to something like accident. Grose, the antiquarian, was on a visit to Riddell of Friars-Carse, who, like himself, had a collection

"Of auld nick-nackets,
Rusty airn caps and jinglin' jackets
Wad haud the Lothians thre in tacketts
A towmpnt gude."

The Poet was invited to add wings to the evening hours, and something like friendship was established between him and the social Englishman, which both imagined would be lasting. In conversing about the antiquities of Scotland, Burns begged that Grose would introduce Alloway kirk into his projected work; and, to fix the subject on his mind, related some of the wild stories of devilry and witchcraft with which Scotland abounds. The antiquarian listened to them all, and then said, "Write a poem on it, and I'll put in the verses with an engraving of the ruin." Burns set his muse to work; he could hardly sleep for the spell that was upon him, and with his "barmy noddle working prime," walked out to his favourite path along the river-bank.

"Tam O'Shanter" was the work of a single day; the name was taken from the farm of Shanter in Carrick, the story from tradition. Mrs. Burns relates that, observing Robert walking with long swinging sort of strides and apparently muttering as he went, she let him alone for some time; at length she took the children with her and went forth to meet him; he seemed not to observe her, but continued his walk; "on this," said she, "I stepped aside with the bairns among the broom—and past us he came, his brow flushed and his eyes shining; he was reciting these lines:—

'Now Tam! O Tam! had thee been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannan,
Been snaw-white seventeen bunder linen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdies!
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!'

I wish ye had but seen him! he was in such ecstasy that the tears were happing down his cheeks." The Poet had taken writing materials with him, and, leaning on a turf fence

which commanded a view of the river, he committed the poem to paper, walked home, and read it in great triumph at the fire-side. It came complete and perfect from his fancy at the first heat;—no other work in the language contains such wondrous variety of genius in the same number of lines. His own account of his rapture in composition confirms the description of Mrs. Burns:—"I seized," said he to a correspondent, "my gilt-headed Wangee rod in my left hand—an instrument indispensably necessary—in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quick and quicker,—out skipt I among the broomy banks of the Nith to muse."

Burns found his tale in several prose traditions. One stormy night, amid squalls of wind and blasts of hail—in short, on such a night as the devil would choose to take the air in, a farmer was plashing homewards from the forge with plough-irons on his shoulder. As he approached Alloway kirk, he was startled by a light glimmering in the haunted edifice; he walked up to the door, and saw a cauldron suspended over a fire, in which the heads and limbs of unchristened children were beginning to simmer. As there was neither fiend nor witch to protect it, he unhooked the cauldron, poured out the contents, and carried his trophy home, where it long remained an evidence of the truth of his story. We may observe in the poem the use made by Burns of this Kyle legend. Another story supplied him with two of his chief characters. A farmer having been detained by business in Ayr, found himself crossing the old bridge of Doon about the middle of the night. When he reached the gate of Alloway kirk-yard, a light came streaming from a Gothic window in the gable, and he saw with surprise a batch of witches dancing merrily round their master the devil, who was keeping them in motion by the sound of his bag-pipe. The farmer stopt his horse and gazed at their gambols; he saw several old dames of his acquaintance among them; they were footing it in their smocks. Unfortunately for him, one of them wore a smock too short by a span or so, which so tickled the farmer that he burst out with "Weel luppen, Maggie wi' the short sark!" He recollected himself, turned his horse's head and spurred and switched with all his might towards the brig of Doon, well knowing that—

"A running stream they darena cross."

When he reached the middle of the arch, one of the hags sprang to seize him, but nothing was on her side of the stream saving the horse's tail, which gave way to her grasp as if touched by lightning.

In a Galloway version of the tradition, it is recorded that the witch, seizing the horse by the tail, stopt it in full career in the centre of the bridge; upon which the farmer struck a back-

handed blow with his sword that set him free, and enabled him to pass the stream without further molestation. On reaching his own house Le found, to his horror, a woman's hand hanging in his horse's tail; and next morning was informed that the handsome wife of one of his neighbours was dangerously ill, and not expected to live. He went to see her—she turned away her face from him, and obstinately refused to say what ailed her; upon which he forcibly bared her wounded arm, and, displaying the bloody hand, accused her of witchcraft and dealings with the devil; thereupon she made a confession, and was condemned and burnt. The Galloway legend was too tragic for the aim of the Poet; it would have jarred with the wild humour of the scene in the kirk, and prevented him from displaying his wondrous powers of uniting the laughable with the serious, and the witty with the awful. Cromek, a curious inquirer, was informed on the spot that the places where the packman was smothered in the snow—where drunken Charlie broke his neck—where the murdered child was found by hunters—and where the mother of poor Mungo hanged herself, were no imaginary matters. The poetry of Burns is full of truth.

"Tam O'Shanter" was received with all the applause to which it is richly entitled. "I have seldom in my life," says Lord Woodhouselee, "tasted of higher enjoyment from any work of genius than I have received from this composition; and I am much mistaken if this poem alone, had you never written another syllable, would not have been sufficient to have transmitted your name down to posterity with high reputation." Of this "happiest of all mixtures of spirituality and practical life," as Sir Egerton Brydges calls the tale, the poet was justly proud. He carried it in his pocket, and read it willingly to those in whose taste he had any trust. He read it to my father. His voice was deep, manly, and melodious, and his eye sparkled as he saw the effect of his poem on all around—young and old. A writer who happened to be present on business, stung, perhaps, with that sarcastic touch on the brethren—

"Three lawyers' tongues turn'd inside out,
With lies seam'd, like a beggar's clout,"

remarked that he thought the language describing the witches' orgies obscure. "Obscure, sir," said Burns, "ye know not the language of that great master of your own art—the devil. If you get a witch for a client, you will not be able to manage her defence."

"The Whistle" is another poem of this happy season. The meeting, it seems, for deciding the ownership of the musical relique should have taken place sooner.—"Big with the idea," said Burns to Riddell, "of this important day (October 16, 1789,) at Friars-Carse, I have watched the elements and skies, in the full per-

suasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent. The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly; they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes and the mighty claret-shed of the day. For me, as Thomson, in his *Winter*, says of the storm, I shall

‘Hear astonish’d and astonish’d sing.’”

The story of the “Whistle” is curious:—A Dane came to Scotland with the Princess of Denmark, in the reign of our sixth James, and challenged all the toppers of the north to a contest of the bottle. A Whistle of ebony was to be the prize of the day; this he had blown in triumph at the courts of Copenhagen, Stockholm, Moscow, and Warsaw, and was only prevented from doing the same at the Scottish court by Sir Robert Laurie of Maxwellton, who, after a contest of three days and three nights, left the Dane under the table,

“And blew on the whistle his requiem shrill.”

On Friday, 16th October, 1790, the Whistle was again contended for in the same element by the descendants of the great Sir Robert:—

“Three joyous good fellows, with hearts clear of flaw;
Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law;
And trusty Glenriddel, so skilful in old coins,
And gallant Sir Robert, deep read in old wines.”

And, that their deeds might not be inglorious, they chose an inspired chronicler to attend them:—

“A bard was selected to witness the fray,
And tell future ages the feats of the day:
A bard who detested all sadness and spleen,
And wish’d that Parnassus a vineyard had been.”

This is one of the most dramatic of lyrics; is in character, and in the strictest propriety of sentiment and language. The contest took place at Friars-Carse, a place of great natural beauty; but the combatants closed the shutters against the loveliness of the landscape, either up the Nith or down, and, lighting the dining-room, ordered the corks of the claret to be drawn. They had already swallowed six bottles a-piece, and day was breaking, when Ferguson, decanting a quart of wine, dismissed it at a draught. Upon this Glenriddel, recollecting that he was an elder, and a ruling one in the kirk, and feeling he was waging an ungodly strife, meekly withdrew from the contest, and

“Left the foul business to folks less divine.”

Though Sir Robert could not well contend both with fate and quart bumpers, he fought to the last, and fell not till the sun arose. Not so Ferguson, and not so Burns; the former sounded a note of triumph on his Whistle:

“Next up rose our bard, like a prophet in drink:—
‘Craigdarroch, thou’lt soar when creation shall sink!
But if thou wouldst flourish immortal in rhyme,
Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!’”

In truth, it is said that the Poet drank bottle for bottle in this arduous contest, and, when daylight came, seemed much disposed to take up the conqueror.

Though Burns had ten large parishes to look after as exciseman, and though the inclination of husbandmen for smuggling in those days kept him busy, his fields seemed as well cultivated, and his crops little less luxuriant, than those of his neighbours. But he felt that his plough was held without profit, and his dairy managed without gain, and remained for weeks at a time at home, intent on other matters than

“Learning his tuneful trade from every bough.”

How he demeaned himself as gauger, farmer, and poet, has been related by an able and observant judge:—“I had an adventure with him,” said Ramsay of Ochtertyre, “when passing through Dumfriesshire in 1790, with Dr. Stewart of Luss. Seeing him pass quickly near Closeburn, I said to my companion, ‘that is Burns.’ On coming to the inn (Brownhill), the ostler told us he would be back in a few hours to grant permits; that where he met with anything seizable he was no better than any other gauger: in everything else he was a perfect gentleman. After leaving a note to be delivered to him on his return, I proceeded to his house, being curious to see his Jean, &c. I was much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis*, and the Poet’s modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary peasants. In the evening, he suddenly bounced in upon us, and said as he entered, ‘I come, to use the words of Shakspeare, stewed in haste.’ In fact he had ridden incredibly fast. We fell into conversation directly, and soon got into the *mare magnum* of poetry. He told me he had now gotten a story for a drama, which he was to call “Rob Macquechan’s Elshin,” from a popular story of King Robert the Bruce being defeated on the water of Cairn, when the heel of his boot having loosened in the flight, he applied to Rob to fix it on, who, to make sure, ran his awl nine inches up the king’s heel. We were now going on at a great rate, when Mr. S—— popped in his head, which put a stop to our discourse, which had become very interesting. Yet in a little while it was resumed; and such was the force and versatility of the bard’s genius, that he made the tears run down Mr. S.’s cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain. Poor Burns! from that time I met him no more.” The Poet had imagined a drama commencing with the early vicissitudes of the fortunes of Bruce—recording his strange, his heroic and sometimes laughable, adventures, till all ended in the glorious consummation at Bannockburn. He allowed, as was his wont, the

subject to float about in his mind, and drew out no plan nor list of characters on paper. "Those who recollect," says Sir Walter Scott, "the masculine and lofty tone of martial spirit which glows in the poem of Bannockburn will sigh to think what the character of the gallant Bruce might have proved under the hand of Burns!"

We find Burns at this period informing Graham of Fintry that the Excise business went on much smoother with him than he had expected, owing to the generous friendship of Mitchell the collector, and Findlater the supervisor.—"I dare to be honest," said he, "and I fear no labour. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the muses; I meet them now and then as I jog among the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr." Of the lyrical fruit of this intercourse, I must render some account.

In the composition of a song, Burns went to work like a painter: what a fine living model is to an artist forming a Venus or a Diana, a lovely woman was to the Poet. He was fascinated through the eye; he thought of the looks of the last fair one he had met, and mused on her charms till the proper inspiration came; and then he laid out colours worthy of a goddess, on

"Fair or foul, it maks na whether."

Jean Lorimer, "The lass of Cruigie-burnwood," had levity at least equal to her beauty. When the first song in her praise was written she lived at Kenmuis-hall in Nithsdale; she was extremely handsome, with uncommon sweetness in her smile, and joyousness in the glance of her eye. The Poet measured his verse over her charms to gratify a gentleman of the name of Gillespie, who was contending in vain with a military adventurer of the name of Whelpdale for the honour of her love. In "My tocher's the jewel," he expresses the scorn which a young lady feels at the selfish sentiments of her lover:

"It's a' for the apple he'll nourish the tree;
It's a' for the hince he'll cherish the bee;
My laddie's sae mickle in love wi' the siller,
He canna hae luve to spare for me."

From love he went to wine; nothing came wrong to him. In this his poetic power resembled his conversational ability. "Gudewife, count the lawin'" is the very essence of sociality and glee:—

"Gane is the day, and mirk's the night,
But we'll no'er stray for fau't o' light;
For ale and brandy's stars and moon,
And blude-red wine's the rising sun."

A little jacobitism was in his heart when he wrote "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame;" a little humour when he penned "What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?" and in "Yon wild mossy mountains" his mind wandered back to a part of his early history, which

he says "is of no consequence to the world to know."

In a happier mood of mind Burns composed "Wha is that at my bower door?"—"It was suggested," said Gilbert, "to my brother, by the Auld man's Address to the Widow, printed in Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany." A vein of pawkie simplicity runs through it.

"Wha's that at my bower-door?
O wha is it but Findlay?
Then gae yero gate, ye'se no be here—
Indeed maun I, quo' Findlay."

"What mak ye sae like a thief?
O come and see, quo' Findlay;
Before the morn ye'll work mischief—
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay."

"Here this night, if ye remain—
I'll remain, quo' Findlay;
I dreid ye'll ken the gate again—
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay."

"The bonnie wee thing" was composed," says the Poet, "on my little idol, the charming lovely Davies." In a letter to the lady herself, he lets us a little into the mystery of his ballad-making.—"I have heard of a gentleman of some genius who was dexterous with his pencil; wherever this person met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his heart, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely, he said, as a nota-bene to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, is my muse to me; and the verses which I do myself the honour to send you are a memento exactly of the same kind that he indulged in. When I meet with a person after my own heart, I positively feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration; and I can no more resist rhyming on the impulse than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air." No poet has offered prettier reasons for writing love-songs.

These complimentary moods gave way to a feeling more serious, when the Poet wrote "Ae fond kiss, and then we sever." The song, I have heard, alludes to Clarinda, and is supposed to embody the sentiments of the Bard when he bade farewell to that Edinburgh beauty. It says all in a few words that can be said on the subject:—

"Who shall say that fortune grieves him.
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me—nae cheerful twinkle lights me:
Dark despair around benights me.
Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly—
Never met, or never parted,
We had no'er been broken-hearted."

The heroine of the "Banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," was Miss Kennedy of Dalgarroch, in Ayr-shire, a young creature beautiful, ac-

complished, and confiding; the song was altered, from its original simple measure, to suit music, accidentally composed by a writer in Edinburgh, whom a musician told to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord and preserve something like rhythm, and he would produce a Scots air. He did so, and this fine air, with a few touches from Clarke, was the result. The despair of "Ae fond kiss, and then we sever," gave way to the gentler sorrows of the "Banks and braes o' bonnie Doon;" and, in its turn, "Love will venture in," asserted the dignity of successful love. This is a very beautiful lyric: the Poet thinks on his mistress, and, looking at all manner of fine flowers, sees her, emblematically, in each: the lily, for purity; the daisy, for simplicity; and the violet, for modesty; are woven into this fragrant and characteristic chaplet.

Having obeyed the impulses of sorrow and serious love, mirth touched the strings of his harp, his heart brightened up, and he poured out, "O! for ane-and-twenty, Tam." The name of the heroine is lost; but her story is true to nature, and cannot be soon forgotten: there is a dance of words in the song suitable to the liveliness of the sentiment. "Sic a wife as Willie had," resembles the ironical and sarcastic chaunts of the old rustic ballad-makers: the picture of Willie's Spouse is not painted in kindly colours:—

"She has an ee—she has but ane,
The cat has twa the very colour,
Five rusty teeth, forbye a stump,
A clapper-tongue wad deave a miller;
A whiskin' beard about her mou',
Her nose and chin they threaten ither:
Sic a wife as Willie had
I wad nae gie a button for her."

This unsensie dame dwelt in Dunscore, at no great distance from Ellisland; her descendants have none of her unlovesome qualities.

If Burns looked to living loveliness for the sake of making new songs, he looked also with affectionate eyes on the old mutilated lyrics of Scotland, and repaired them with unequalled skill. To the ballad of "Hughie Graham," he added some characteristic touches, as also to "Cock up your beaver." Into the latter he has infused a Jacobite feeling:—

"Cock up your beaver and cock it fu' sprush,
We'll over the Border and gie them a brush;
There's somebody there we'll teach better behaviour;
Hey! my brave Johnnie lad, cock up your beaver."

He softened a little the rudeness of "Eppie Macnab," added bitterness to "The weary pound o' tow; some of his fine feeling found its way into "The Collier laddie," and much acid irony was infused into "The carle of Kellyburn-braes."—Cronek informed me that, when he consulted Mrs. Burns respecting the changes which the genius of her husband had

effected in the old songs, she ran her fingers along the pages of the Museum, saying, "Robert gave that one a brushing—this one got a brushing, too:—aye, I mind this one weel, it got a gay good brushing!" But when she came to "The carle of Kellyburn-braes," she said, "He gave this one a terrible brushing." Of these dread additions one specimen will suffice:

"The devil he swore by the edge of his knife,
He pitied the man that was tied to a wife;
The devil he swore by the kirk and the bell,
He was not in wedlock, thank heav'n, but in hell."

The winter-time, which brings much leisure to the farmer, brought little or none to Burns. When he saw his corn secured against rain or snow; his

"Potatoo bings weel snuggit up frae skait;"

his plough frozen in the half-drawn furrow, and heard the curlew's roaring play intimating that winter reigned over the vale, he had to mount his horse and do duty as a gauger, leaving Ellisland to the skill of his wife and the activity of his servants. As early as the harvest of 1790, it was visible to those acquainted with such matters that, as a farmer, the Poet was not thriving; the crop promised, in the eyes of the calculating, to make but a small return, compared with the demand of the rent; and, when he ploughed his ground in the following winter and spring, it was whispered that he would do so no more. He regretted this the less as he now looked upon the Excise as sure bread, and an improving appointment. Some time during the year 1791, his salary was raised to seventy pounds, and he was promised a more compact and less laborious district. This eased his mind amid the loss which he knew he should sustain, in turning the utensils and stock of Ellisland into money. He did not communicate his intentions to any one, though he hesitated not to say that he was losing by his bargain.

This year he was doomed to lose old friends without acquiring new ones. The death of the Earl of Glencairn he regarded as a sore misfortune. That nobleman was not rich, nor was his influence great; but he had a sympathy with poetic feelings not common to men of rank. When he died, the hopes of the Poet seemed to have died also; his "Lament," on the occasion, was a sincere one; the words require only to be uttered by a young bard instead of an old one, to apply, in all respects, to himself. The verse is lyrical, and the sentiments those of nature:—

"The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles a sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me!"

This is the language of a man who thought himself obliged. He wrote nothing half so tender or so touching on the death of the beautiful Miss Burnet, which happened about this time; he tried, but the words came with reluctance:—

"Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies;
Nor envious death so triumph'd in a blow
As that which laid th' accomplish'd Burnet low."

Some will like better the compliment which he paid her in prose. On returning from a first visit to Lord Monboddo, his friend Geddes, of Leith, said, "Well, and did you admire the young lady?"—"I admired God Almighty more than ever," said the Poet; "Miss Burnet is the most heavenly of all His works!" He did not hesitate to use expressions bordering on profanity when speaking of female charms.

"As to my private concerns," he says to Dr. Moore, "I am going on a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the lists of the Excise as a supervisor. I had an immense loss in the death of the Earl of Glencairn, the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise; independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence. So soon as the prince's friends had got in, my getting forward in the Excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be." In these modest hopes the Poet indulged. He had already numbered himself with the "prince's friends;" but the prince was far from power; and had Burns lived till "the dog had," as he said "got his day," he might have found reason to say with Scripture, "put not your trust in princes."

In addition to the sorrow which he felt for the loss of valuable friends, his horse fell with him and broke his arm; and his farm having swept away all his ready money, visions of poverty began to hover in his sight. "Poverty!" he exclaimed, "thou half-sister of Death—thou cousin-german of hell! oppressed by thee, the son of genius, whose ill starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remarks neglected and his person despised: while shallow greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause." In such sarcastic sentiments as these Burns began more and more to indulge:—"How wretched is the man," he says, "that hangs upon the favours of the great!—to shrink from every dignity of man at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who, amid all his tinsel and glitter, and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art—and, perhaps, not so well formed."

He could scarcely resist, however, the request of one of the vainest of those "lordly pieces of

self-consequence," the Earl of Buchan—to come to the coronation of the bust of Thomson on Ednam-hill, at Dryburgh, on the 22nd of September, 1791.—"Suppose Mr. Burns," so runs the mandate, "should, leaving the Nith, go across the country, and meet the Tweed at the nearest point from his farm—and, wandering along the pastoral banks of Thomson's pure parent-stream, catch inspiration in the devious walk, till he finds Lord Buchan sitting on the ruins of Dryburgh; there the Commendator will give him a hearty welcome, and try to light' his lamp at the pure flame of native genius, upon the altar of Caledonian virtue." The Poet had the sickle in his hand when the invitation came; he laid it down, took a walk along the banks of the Nith, composed the verses "to the Shade of Thomson," and sent them to apologize for his absence.

If his poetic feelings were awakened by the invitation of Lord Buchan, his jacobitical partialities were gratified by the present of a valuable snuff-box from Lady Winifred Maxwell, the last in direct descent of the noble family of Nithsdale. This was an acknowledgment for his "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots." There was a picture of that ill-starred princess on the lid.—"In the moment of poetic composition," said Burns, "the box shall be my inspiring genius."—The ballad is a pathetic one. He imagines the queen in an English prison; she hears the birds sing—feels the odours of flowers and her heart swells with the season:

"Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae:
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove their sweets amang;
But I, the queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang!"

He had been reading Percy's ballads, and his verses caught the olden hue and tone of those affecting compositions.

The great Glasgow road ran through the Poet's ground, and the coach often set down west-country passengers, who, trusting to the air they came from, and the accessibility of the bard, made their sometimes unwelcome appearance at the door of Ellisland. Such visitations—from which no man of genius is free—consumed his time and wasted his substance—for hungry friends could not be entertained on air. A neighbour told me that he once found a couple of Ayr-shire travellers, plaided, capped, and over-alled, seated at the door of Burns—their sense of etiquette not allowing them to enter the house in such trim. They were drinking punch, toasting Ayr—auld town and new—vowing that Mauchline was the loveliest of all spots, and Kyle the heart of Scotland. They found their way into Dumfries some time during the night.

In the course of this summer two English gentlemen, who had met Burns in Edinburgh, paid him a visit at Ellisland. On calling at the house, they were told he had walked out on the banks of the Nith. They proceeded in search of him, and found him—

"In sooth it was in strange array."

On a rock that projected into the stream they saw a man angling; he had a cap of fox-skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt from which hung an enormous Highland broadsword;—it was Burns. He received them with great cordiality, and asked them to share his humble dinner. On the table they found boiled beef, with vegetables and barley-broth, of which they partook heartily. After dinner, the bard told them he had no wine to offer, nothing better than Highland whiskey, of which Mrs. Burns set a bottle on the table, and placed his punch-bowl of Scottish marble before him. He mixed the spirit with water and sugar, filled their glasses, and invited them to drink. They were in haste—whiskey, to their southern stomachs, was scarcely tolerable; but the ardent hospitality of the Poet prevailed—the punch began to disappear, and his conversation was unto them as a charm. He ranged over a great variety of topics, illuminating whatever he touched. He related the tales of his infancy and of his youth; he recited some of the gayest and some of the tenderest of his poems; in the wildest of his strains of mirth he threw in some touches of melancholy, and spread around him the electric emotions of his powerful mind. The Highland whiskey improved in its flavour; the marble bowl was again and again emptied and replenished; the Poet's guests forgot the flight of time and the prudence becoming visitors, at the hour of midnight, lost their way returning to Dumfries, and could scarcely count its three steeples assisted by the morning dawn.

Burns still maintained his intercourse with the literati of Scotland. He visited Edinburgh once more, and finally arranged his affairs with the difficult Creech; called on some of his former intimates, and left his card at the door of several lords; but his reception seems, save from one or two, to have been uncordial. What the learned thought of the grasp of the Poet's mind may be gathered from the surprise which one of them expresses at his comprehending the meaning of Alison's work on the principles of taste:—"I own, sir," said the Poet to the philosopher, "that at first glance several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangour of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime than the twingle-twangle of a Jew's harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twigg, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and

elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all association of ideas;—these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith." "This," says Dugald Stewart, I remember to have read with some degree of surprise at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed of the general principles of the law of association." It would seem, however, that the Poet, if convinced, was convinced against his will: he was slow in believing that at any time a burdock was esteemed equal in loveliness to a rose, or the chirp of a hedge-sparrow reckoned as noble as the cry of an eagle.

"It may naturally excite some surprise," says Lockhart, "that of the convivial conversation of so distinguished a convivialist, so few specimens have been preserved in the Memoirs of his Life. The truth seems to be that those of his companions who chose to have the best memory for such things happened also to have the keenest relish for his wit and his humour, when exhibited in their coarser phases. Among a heap of MS. memoranda with which I have been favoured, I find but little that one could venture to present in print; and the following specimens of that little must, for the present, suffice.

"A gentleman who had recently returned from the East Indies, where he had made a large fortune, which he showed no great alacrity about spending, was of opinion, it seems, one day, that his company had had enough of wine, rather sooner than they came to that conclusion: he offered another bottle in feeble and hesitating terms, and remained dallying with the cork-screw, as if in hopes that some one would interfere, and prevent further effusion of Bordeaux. 'Sir,' said Burns, losing temper, and betraying in his mood something of the old rusticity—'Sir, you have been in Asia, and for aught I know, on the Mount of Moriah, and you seem to hang over your *tappit-hen* as remorsefully as Abraham did over his son Isaac.—Come, Sir, to the sacrifice!'

"At another party, the society had suffered considerably from the prosing of a certain well-known provincial *Bore* of the first magnitude; and Burns as much as any of them; although overawed, as it would seem, by the rank of the nuisance, he had not only submitted, but condescended to applaud. The grandee being suddenly summoned to another company in the same tavern, Burns immediately addressed himself to the chair, and demanded a bumper. The president thought he was about to dedicate his toast to the distinguished absentee: 'I give,' said the Bard, 'I give you the health, gentlemen all,—of the waiter that called my Lord — out of the room!'

If his poems of this year are not numerous, the "Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson"

is one of the sweetest and most beautiful of his latter compositions. He calls on nature, animate and inanimate, to lament the loss of one who held his honours immediately from God :—

"Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood ;
Ye grouse that crap the heather-bud ;
Ye curlews calling thro' a clad ;
Ye whistling plover :
An' mourn, ye whirling pattrick brood—
He's gane for ever !"

He copied out the poem, and sending it to his friend, M'Murdo, said, "You knew Henderson ; I have not flattered his memory." The hero of this noble poem was a soldier of fortune : one who rose by deeds, and not by birth : he was universally esteemed in the northern circles for the generosity of his nature, his courtesy and gentlemanly bearing : he died young.

Burns wrote several new songs, and amended some old ones, during this season, for his friend Johnson's work. "Afton water" was an offering of other days to the accomplished lady of Stair and Afton. "Bonnie Bell" is in honour of the charms of a Nithsdale dame, and "The deuk's dang o'er my daddie" had its origin in an old chant, some of the words of which the song still retains. "She's fair and fause" records the unfortunate termination of a friend's courtship ; there is all or more than the bitterness of disappointed love in the concluding verse :—

"Whoe'er ye be that woman love,
To this be never blind,
Nae ferlie 'tis, tho' fickle she prove,
A woman has't by kind.
O woman ! lovely woman fair !
An angel form's fa'n to thy share,
'Twa'd been o'er meikle to gien thee mair—
I mean an angel mind."

"The Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman" is at once witty and ludicrous. It harmonized with the feelings of the north, where a gauger was long looked on as a national grievance, or rather insult. "The Song of Death" is the last lyric which the rural walks of Ellisland inspired. On the 17th of December, 1791, he copied it for Mrs. Dunlop, and said,—"I have just finished the following song, which, to a lady, the descendant of Wallace, and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology." He imagines a field of battle, and puts his truly heroic song into the mouths of men wounded and dying ; the sentiments uttered were those of his heart :—

"In the field of proud honour, our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save,—
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands,
Oh ! who would not die with the brave !"

"This hymn," says Currie, "is worthy of the Grecian muse, when Greece was most conspicuous for genius and valour." Burns thought

of printing it separately with the air, which is a fine old Highland one ; some one whom he consulted advised him against this, and so prevented him from making his country acquainted with his unaltered feeling, at a time when his character was beginning to be maligned by the secret whisperer and the pensioned spy.

Burns briefly, in his letters to his brother and others, intimates the loss he endured by continuing in Ellisland ; but he has no where assigned reasons, nor entered into explanations. This has been misinterpreted to his injury. He alludes to his own trials, when he says to Mrs. Dunlop :—"I wish the farmer great joy of his new acquisition to his family : I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, 'a cursed life !' As to a laird farming his own property, sowing his own corn in hope, and reaping it in spite of brittle weather, in gladness, knowing that none can say unto him, 'What dost thou ?'—fattening his herds, shearing his flocks, rejoicing at Christmas, and begetting sons and daughters, until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life ! but devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat !"

When it was made known in December, 1791, that Burns was about to relinquish the lease of Ellisland, his merits as a farmer were eagerly canvassed by the husbandmen around. One imputed his failure to the duties of the Excise ; to his being compelled to gallop two hundred miles per week, to inspect yeasty barrels, when his farm required his presence ; another said that Mrs. Burns was intimate with a town life, but ignorant of the labours of barn and byre ; while a third observed that Ellisland was out of heart, and, in short, was the dearest farm on Nithsdale. The failure of his farming projects, and the limited income with which he was compelled to support an increasing family and an expensive station in life, preyed upon his spirits ; and, during these fits of despair, he was willing too often to become the companion of the thoughtless and the gross. I am grieved to say that, besides leaving the book too much for the bowl, and grave and wise friends for lewd and reckless companions, he was also in the occasional practise of composing songs, in which he surpassed the licentiousness, as well as the wit and humour, of the old Scottish muse. These have unfortunately found their way to the press, and I am afraid they cannot be recalled. "The reader," says Lockhart, "must be sufficiently prepared to hear that, from the time when he entered on his excise duties, the Poet more and more neglected the concerns of his farm : occasionally he might be seen holding the plough, an exercise in which he excelled, and was proud of excelling, or stalking down his furrows, with the white sheet of grain wrapt about him, a 'teaty seedsman,'

but he was more commonly occupied in far different pursuits."

Had Mr. Miller of Dalswinton been on the same friendly terms with the Poet as when, in a fit of generous feeling, he offered him the choice of his farms at a rent of his own fixing, Burns might have lived long, and, perhaps, prosperously, in Ellisland. But they were too haughty in their natures to continue friends; Miller required respect and submission, which the Poet was not disposed to pay; and I have heard it averred by one who was in a situation to know, that the former was not loth to get rid of a tenant by whose industry he had no chance of being enriched, from whom he could not well exact rent, and whose wit paid little respect to persons. The Poet dispersed his stock and implements by auction, among many eager purchasers; restored the land and onstead to the proprietor; and, paying him one pound fourteen shillings for dilapidations in thatch, glass, and slating, moved off with his household to Dumfries, leaving nothing at Ellisland but a putting-stone, with which he loved to exercise his strength—a memory of his musings which can never die, and three hundred pounds of his money sunk beyond redemption, in a speculation from which all augured happiness.

PART IV.—DUMFRIES.

BURNS removed his wife and children, with his humble furniture, to a house near the lower end of the Bank-Vennel in Dumfries. The neighbourhood was to his mind; and, as this was near the stamp-office, it is probable that John Syme, the "Stamp-office Johnnie," of the Poet's election ballad, influenced his choice. He had other neighbours whom he could not but esteem: Captain Hamilton lived on the opposite side of the way; Provost Staig, with whose family Burns was already intimate, was out a few doors off, while Dr. Maxwell, a skilful physician, an accomplished gentleman, and a confirmed republican, dwelt in the next street. The Sands, where cattle are bought and sold, was beside him, the Nith was within a good stone's cast—the town too is compact and beautiful.

The Poet had no expensive acquaintance to entertain; and his wife, with a single servant, was frugal, and anxious to make the little they had go far. But he had no longer the rough abundance of a farm to resort to; his meal, his malt, his butter, and his milk, were all to buy, and his small salary required the guidance of a considerate head and hand. To calculate was easy, had it been possible to lay down an exact system of expenditure; as a man of genius, he was liable to the outlay of correspondence, distant and often unexpected; he was exposed to the inroads of friends and admirers, who consumed his time and his sub-

stance also; he longed for knowledge, which, to obtain, he had to buy; he desired to see by books what the republic of literature, of which he was a member, was about, and this required money; and he was, moreover, of a nature kindly and hospitable, and could not live in that state of frugal circumspection which a gentleman who kept a house, and sometimes a horse, on seventy pounds per annum, required.

Even the wandering poor were to the Poet a heavy tax; he allowed no one to go past his door without a halfpenny or a handful of meal. He was kind to such helpless creatures as are weak in mind, and saunter harmlessly about: a poor half-mad creature—the Madge Wildfire, it is said, of Scott—always found a mouthful ready for her at the bard's fire-side; nor was he unkind to a crazy and tippling prodigal named Quin. "Jamie," said the Poet one day, as he gave him a penny, "you should pray to be turned from the evil o' your ways; you are ready to run now to melt that into whiskey." "Turn," said Jamie, who was a wit in his way, "I wish some one would turn me into the worm o' Will Hyslop's whiskey-still, that the drink might dribble continually through me." "Well said, Jamie!" answered the Poet, "you shall have a glass of whiskey once a week for that, if ye'll come sober for it." A friend rallied Burns for indulging such creatures:—"You don't understand the matter," said he, "they are poets: they have the madness of the muse, and all they want is the inspiration—a mere trifle!"

The labours of the excise now and then led him along a barren line of sea-coast, extending from Caerlaverock-Castle, where the Maxwells dwelt of old, to Annan water. This district fronts the coast of England; and, from its vicinity to the Isle of Man, was in those days infested with daring smugglers, who poured in brandy, Holland-gin, tea, tobacco, and salt, in vast quantities. Small farmers, and persons engaged in inland traffic, diffused these commodities through the villages; they were generally vigorous and daring fellows, in whose hearts a gauger or two bred no dismay. They were well mounted, acquainted with the use of a cutlass, an oak-sapling, or a whip loaded with lead; and, when mounted between a couple of brandy-kegs, and their horses' heads turned to the hills, not one exciseman in ten dared to stop them. To prevent the disembarkation of run-goods, when a smuggling craft made its appearance, was a duty to which the Poet was liable to be called, and many a darksome hour he was compelled to keep watch, that the peasantry might not have the pleasure of drinking tea or brandy duty free. There was something which suited his fancy in all this. He had, galloping from point to point, much excitement of mind, and hopes of golden booty, but not without blows.

In whatever adventure he was engaged, "still his speech was song." Mounted on the successor of Jenny Geddes, whose mortal career closed at Ellisland, he "muttered his wayward fancies as he roved," and sang the beauty of the maidens of the land, and the pastoral charms of the country. It was in one of his expeditions against the smugglers that he wrote the brief but exquisite lyric, "Louis, what reck I by thee?" To say much in a few words is one of the characteristics of his muse:—

"Louis, what reck I by thee,
Or Geordie on his ocean?
Dyvor, beggar loons to me,—
I reign in Jeannie's bosom!"

"Out over the Forth" is another of his short and lucky compositions. "The carding o't" belongs to the same class; nothing in all the compass of lyric verse is more truly natural:—

"I coft a stane o' haslock woo'
To make a coat to Johnnie o't;
For Johnnie is my only jo,
I lo'e him best of ony yet.
For though his locks be lyart grey,
And though his brow be beld aboon,
Yet I hae seen him on a day
The pride of a' the parishen."

One day, during the month of August, he was surprised by a visit from Miss Lesley Baillie, afterwards Mrs. Cumming of Logie, a beauty of the west of Scotland.—"On which," says Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, "I took my horse, though God knows I could ill spare the time, accompanied her father and her fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them, and, riding home, I composed the following ballad." Some of the verses of this song are in his best manner:—

"To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever:
For nature made her what she is,
And never made anither!
The deil he couldna skaitch thee,
Nor aught that wad belang thee,
He'd loo' into thy bonny face,
And say, 'I canna wrang thee.'"

Most of the songs which I have hitherto noticed were written for the Museum of Johnson. A candidate of higher pretence now made his appearance: this was George Thomson. "I have," said he, in a letter to Burns, "employed many leisure hours in selecting and collecting the best of our national melodies for publication. I have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air. To render this work perfect, I am desirous of having the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so, in many instances, is allowed by every one con-

versant with our musical collections. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of 'the Cotter's Saturday Night;' and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen."

An application such as this appealed to too many associations for Burns to resist; he replied with something like the enthusiasm of a lover when his mistress asks a favour, "As the request you make," said the Poet, September 16, 1792, "will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. If you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed, at least, a sprinkling of our native tongue. As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm in which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money would be downright prostitution of soul!"

To stipulations such as these Thomson could have no objections to offer: he was glad to get the Bard on his own romantic terms. The first fruits of the bargain was "The Lea Rig." Though a beautiful song, it seems not to have been to the satisfaction of the Poet. "I tried my hand on the air," he says, "and could make nothing more of it than the verses which I enclose. Heaven knows they are poor enough! All my earlier love songs were the breathings of ardent passion; and though it might have been easy, in after times, to have given them the polish, yet that polish would have defaced the legend of my heart which was so faithfully inscribed on them."

"Highland Mary" followed this. The lyrical flow of the verse, and the truth and pathos of the sentiments, make it a favourite with all who have voices or feelings. "I think," says the Poet, "the song is in my happiest manner: it refers to one of the most interesting passages in my youthful days; and I own I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition." He makes inanimate nature a sharer in his rapture:

'How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birch!
How rich the hawthorn's blossom!
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary!"

This exquisite lyric proves how much the passionate affections of his youth still moved

him. He was ready, when Mary's image rose on his fancy, to pour out his feelings in song: he was more than usually inspired whenever he thought of her. The thorn, under whose shade the lovers sat, is still pointed out and held sacred by the peasantry.

The season of winter was propitious to the muse of Burns; there was something of old nabit in this: the long evenings bring leisure to the farmer, and the farmer was still strong in him. "Auld Rob Morris" was written in November; the idea is taken from an earlier song, but the Burns-spirit soon gained the ascendant: he has painted the portrait of his heroine in similes:—

"She's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May;
She's sweet as the evening among the new hay;
As blythe and as artless as lambs on the lea,
And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e."

"Duncan Gray" came to the world in December, had he come in summer, he could not have been more "a lad of grace;" he went a wooing in a pleasant time, on gude Yule night, when all were joyous—but

"Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Looked askint and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh."

He was not however to be daunted with this: he knew woman better:—

"Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,
Meg was deaf as Ailisa craig;
Duncan sigh'd baith out and in;
Grat his een baith bleer'd and blin';
Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn!"

She relented.—"Duncan Gray," said the Poet, "is a light horse-gallop of an air which precludes sentiment—the ludicrous is its ruling feature."

"O! poortith, cauld and restless love" is a song full of other feelings: the heroine is said to have been Jean Lorimer, the lass of Craigieburn wood; and this is countenanced by the sentiment of one impassioned verse:—

"Her een sae bonny blue betray
How she repays my passion;
But prudence is her o'erword ay
She talks of rank and fashion.
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?"

A being of a more celestial nature inspired that magnificent lyric, "The Vision." The ruined college of Lincluden, which stands among antique trees on a beautiful plot of rising ground, where the Cluden unites with the Nith, a little above Dumfries, was a favourite haunt of the Poet, as it is of all lovers of landscape beauty. On a moonlight evening he imagined himself musing alone among the splendid ruins: the dust of a Scottish princess, and the bones of one

of the intrepid Douglasses brought recollections of ancient independence to his mind, while the quiet and beautiful scenery around awakened inspiration. For liquid ease of language and heroic grandeur of conception "The Vision" is unequalled: the commencing verse prepares us for the coming of something more than human:—

"As I stood by yon roofless tower,
Where the wa' flower scents the dewy air,
Where the howlet mourns in her ivy bower,
And tells the midnight moon her care—
The winds were laid, the air was still,
The stars they shot along the sky,
The fox was howling on the hill,
And the distant-echoing glens reply."

While enjoying the scene, and looking on the northern streamers, the Vision of Liberty descended or arose before him: not the blood-stained nymph of that name beloved by the Jacobin Club, but a Liberty of Scottish extraction, stern and stalwart, of the rougher sex, attired like an ancient minstrel, carrying a harp, and wearing the symbol of freedom. The majestic apparition touched his harp, and chanted a strain which spoke of former joys and present sorrows, in language which the Poet durst only describe. This fine lyric was intended, with some modifications, to be wrought into the drama of "The Bruce," a subject never wholly out of the Bard's fancy.

From musing on woman's love and man's freedom, Burns was rudely awakened. An inquiry regarding the sentiments which he entertained, and the language in which he had indulged concerning "Thrones and Dominions," was directed to be made by the Commissioners of Excise, pursuant to instructions, it is said, received from high quarters. It will probably never be known who the pestilent informer against the Poet was: some contemptible wretch who had suffered from his wit, or who envied his fame, gave the information on which the Board of Excise acted, and he was subjected to a sort of inquisition. The times indeed in which he lived were perilous, and government found it no easy thing to rule or tranquillize the agitated passions of the people. A new light had arisen on the nations: freedom burst out like a summer's sun in France; monarchy was trampled under foot; democracy arose in its place; equality in all, save intellect, was preached up, and the true order of nature was to be restored to the delighted world.

This doctrine was welcomed widely in Scotland: it resembled, in no small degree, the constitution of the Calvinistic kirk, which is expressly democratic; and it accorded with the sentiments which education and knowledge awaken—for who is so blind as not to see that idols, dull and gross, occupy most of the high places which belong to genius as a birthright? It corresponded wondrously too with the notions of Burns: it harmonised with the plan which

he perceived in nature, and was in strict keeping with his sentiments of free-will and independence. "He was disposed," says Professor Walker, "from constitutional temper, from education, and from accidents of life, to a jealousy of power, and a keen hostility against every system which enabled birth and opulence to intercept those rewards which he conceived to belong to genius and virtue." That he desired to see true genius honoured, and wealthy presumption checked—that he wished to take his place on the table-land among peers and princes, and obtain station and importance—to adorn which his high powers, he believed, were given—were desires natural to a gifted mind; and it could not be but galling for him to see men who had not a tithe of his talent rolling in luxury, while he was doomed to poverty and dependence. That these sentiments were in the heart of Burns I know; that he ever sought to give them full utterance, or entertained them farther than as theories grateful to his mind, it would be difficult to find proof.

From these charges Burns strove to defend himself: he addressed his steady friend Graham, of Fintry, on the subject; the letter is dated December, 1792.—"I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your Board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government. Sir, you are a husband—and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected. I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors—if worse can be than those I have mentioned—hung over my head; and I say that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British Constitution, on revolution principles, next, after my God, I am most devoutly attached. Fortune, sir, has made you powerful and me impotent—has given you patronage and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; I could brave misfortune—I could face ruin—for, at the worst, 'Death's thousand doors stand open;' but the tender concerns which I have mentioned—the claims and ties which I see at this moment, and feel around me—how they unnerve courage and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due. To these, sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me; and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved."

These are the words of his private letter: it enclosed another, intended for the eye of the

commissioners, and which was laid before the Board. In the second epistle, Burns disclaimed all idea of setting up a republic, and declared that he stood by the constitutional principles of the revolution of 1688: at the same time he felt that corruptions had crept in, which every patriotic Briton desired to see amended.—"This last remark," says the Poet, in his celebrated letter to John Francis Erskine, afterwards Earl of Mar, "gave great offence; and one of our supervisors-general, a Mr. Corbet, was instructed to inquire on the spot, and to document me—'That my business was to act, *not to think*; and that whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be *silent and obedient*.' Mr. Corbet was my steady friend; so, between Mr. Graham and him, I have been partly forgiven; only I understand that all hopes of my getting officially forward are blasted."

The above words were written by the Poet, April 13, 1793; yet Mr. Findlater, then his superior officer, says, "I may venture to assert that when Burns was accused of a leaning to democracy, and an inquiry into his conduct took place, he was subjected, in consequence thereof, to no more than perhaps a private or verbal caution, to be more circumspect in future. Neither do I believe his promotion was thereby affected, as has been stated." Burns, I apprehend, knew best how this was; an order to act, and not to think; and, whatever might be men and measures, to be silent and obedient, seems a sharp sort of private caution. That the records of the Excise-office, as some one assured Lockhart, exhibit no traces of this too memorable matter, is not to be wondered at: expulsions alone are entered—or, if the records say more, memoranda, so little to the honour of the commissioners, will neither be eagerly sought for, nor willingly found. That Burns never got forward is certain; that he ceased to speak of his hopes of advancement, is also true. What was the cause of this? That it did not arise from his want of skill or his inattention to his duties, Findlater furnishes undeniable testimony, and other evidence can readily be found; nor was it because death slept too early in and frustrated the desire of the Board to advance him, for he survived their insulting and crushing inquiry more than three years and a half. He survived, indeed, but he was no longer the bright and enthusiastic being who looked forward with eager hope; who ascended in fancy the difficult steep of fame, and who set coteries in a roar of laughter, or moved them to tears.

Reasons for this harshness on the part of Government—for the Board of Excise was but the acting servant—have been anxiously sought, in the words and deeds of Burns.—"He stood," says Walker, "on a lofty eminence, surrounded by enemies as well as by friends, and no indiscretion which he committed was suffered to escape." His looks were watched; his words

weighed; and, wheresoever he went, the eyes of the malignant and the envious were on him. I have been told, by one incapable of misleading me, that Burns sometimes made his appearance in a club of obscure individuals in Dumfries, where toasts were given, and songs sung which required closed doors. I have also been informed that when invited to a private dinner, where the entertainer proposed "the health of William Pitt," the Poet said sharply, "Let us drink the health of a greater and better man—George Washington;" and it is also true that when Dumourier, the republican general, deserted the cause of his country, and joined her enemies, Burns rashly chanted that short song, beginning

"You are welcome to despots, Dumourier."

Nay more, I have the proof before me that he wrote a scoffing ballad on the foreign sovereigns who united to crush French liberty; but then all these matters happened after, not before, he was "documented" by the Board of Excise. That he forgot now and then what was due to the dignity of his genius, is no new admission. The club which sung songs with closed doors, did so to hinder the landlady, not the landlord, from hearing; the dinner where he toasted Washington, and was sullen because it was not drunk, took place in 1793. In Midsummer the same year, Dumourier forsook the standard of his country, and was welcomed by despots; and with regard to the ballad on the sovereigns, I am sure the gravest of them all would have laughed heartily at the vivid but indecorous wit of the composition.

That Burns was nevertheless very indiscreet, it would be vain to deny. "I was at the play in Dumfries, October, 1792," thus writes, in 1835, a gentleman of birth and talent, "the Caledonian Hunt being then in town—the play was 'As you like it;' Miss Fontenelle, Rosalind—when 'God save the King' was called for and sung; we all stood up, uncovered—but Burns sat still in the middle of the pit, with his hat on his head. There was a great tumult, with shouts of 'Turn him out!' and 'Shame, Burns!' which continued a good while, at last he was either expelled or forced to take off his hat—I forget which."

A more serious indiscretion has been imputed to him. Lockhart relates that, on the 27th of February, 1792, a smuggling brig entered the Solway, and Burns was one of the party of officers appointed to watch her motions. It was soon discovered that her crew were numerous, well armed, and likely to resist; upon which Lewars, a brother exciseman, galloped off to Dumfries, and Crawford, the superintendent, went to Ecclefechan for military assistance. Burns manifested much impatience at being left on a cold exposed beach, with a force unequal to cope with those to whom he was opposed

and exclaimed against the dilatory movements of Lewars, wishing the devil might take him. Some one advised him to write a song about it; on which the Poet, taking a few strides among the shells and pebbles, chanted "The deil's awa' wi' the exciseman." The song was hardly composed, when up came Lewars with his soldiers, on which Burns, putting himself at their head, his pistols in his pockets, and his sword in his hand, waded mid-waist deep into the sea, and carried the smuggler. She was armed. The Poet, whose conduct was much commended, purchased four of her brass guns, and sent them as a present to the French Directory. These, with the letter which accompanied them, were intercepted on their way to France. The suspicions of government were awakened by this breach of decorum, and men in power turned their eyes on the bard, and opened their ears to all his unguarded sayings. That the smuggler was captured chiefly by the bravery of Burns I have been often told; but I never heard it added that he purchased her guns and sent them to the Directory. The biographer seems to have had his information from persons connected with the Excise; but I suspect the story is not more accurate than that, when accused of a leaning to democracy, "he was subjected to no more than perhaps a verbal or private caution to be more circumspect in future."

Burns felt humbled and hurt: he was degraded in his own eyes; he was pushed rudely down from his own little independent elevation, and treated like an imbecile, whose words and actions were to be regulated by the ungentle members of the Board of Excise.—"Have I not," he says to Erskine, "a more precious stake in my country's welfare than the richest dukedom in it? I have a large family of children, and the prospect of many more. I have three sons, who, I see already, have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of slaves."

It is pleasing to escape with the Poet from the racks of the Board of Excise, and accompany him on his excursions along the banks of the Nith, where he soothed his spirit by composing songs for the publications of Thomson or Johnson. In January, 1793, he wrote "Lord Gregory;" in March, "Wandering Willie" and "Jessie," and in April, "The Poor and Honest Sodger." The first is borrowed in some measure from the exquisite old ballad of "The Lass of Lochroyan," the second is more original:—

"Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
It was na the blast brought the tear to my ee;
Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie;
The simmer to nature—my Willie to me."

The third was written in honour of the young and the lovely Jessie Staig of Dumfries; and

the fourth was awakened by the prospect of coming war, which ended not till it laid many kingdoms desolate, and put the half of Britain into mourning. In the remarks of Thomson on his songs he was not always acquiescent.—“Give me leave,” he says, “to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade; of pathos, sentiment, and point you are a complete judge: but there is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity. Now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.” He was as anxious about the purity of Scottish music as about the simplicity of the verse. “One hint,” he says to Thomson, “let me give you: whatever Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scottish airs; let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules, but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.”

The beauties whom Burns met on Nithside inspired many of the sweetest of his songs: the daughters of his friend, John M'Murdo, were then very young; but they were also very lovely, and had all the elegance and simplicity which poets love. To Jean M'Murdo we owe the ballad of “Bonnie Jean.” “I have some thoughts,” he says to Thomson, “of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full, but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out. The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M——, daughter of Mr. M—— of D——, one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.” He thought very well of this composition; he asks if the image in the following sweet verse is not original:—

“As in the bosom o' the stream
The moonbeam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling, pure, was faithful love
Within the breast o' bonnie Jean.”

Her sister Phillis, a young lady equally beautiful and engaging, inspired the Poet also; though he imputes the verses in which he sings of her charms to the entreaty of Clarke, the musician. The first of these lyrics begins:—

“While larks, with little wing,
Fann'd the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring,
Forth I did fare.”

The other contains that fine verse:—

“Her voice is the song of the morning,
That wakes through the green-spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
On music, and pleasure, and love.”

Ideal loveliness sometimes appeared to him in his solitary wanderings. Autumn he reckoned a propitious season for verse: he wrote thus to Thomson in the month of August:—“I roved out yestreen for a gloamin'-shot at the muses; when the muse that presides over the shores of Nith, or, rather, my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following: I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet, simple inspirer that was by my elbow, ‘smooth gliding without step,’ and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her; so I more than suspect she has followed me hither, or, at least, makes me occasional visits.” The song which this celestial lady of the west awakened commences thus:—

“Come, let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder,
And I shall spurn as vilest dust
The world's wealth and grandeur.”

From lower sources other lyrics of this period are said to have sprung. To the winning looks of a young girl who “brewed gude ale for gentlemen,” and was indulgent even to rakish customers, we owe the song of “The golden locks of Anna,” of which there are several versions, and none quite decorous, though a clerical biographer of the Bard has said otherwise. A purer song, “The mirk night of December” had its origin in a similar quarter:—

“O May I thyn was ne'er so sweet,
As the mirk night of December,
For sparkling was the rosy wine,
And private was the chamber:
And dear was she I dare na name,
But I will ay remember.”

Burns was as ready with his verse to solace the woes of others, as to give utterance to his own. “You, my dear sir,” he says to Thomson, “will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham's story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows.”—The song expressing the sentiments of his friend is that sublime one—

“Had I a cave on some wild distant shore.”

The concluding verse, a lady told me, always made her shudder:—

“Falsest of womankind I canst thou declare,
All thy fond plighted vows—fleeing as air?
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury:
Then in thy bosom try
What peace is there!”

To the influence of thunder, lightning, and rain we owe, we are told, the heroic address of

Bruce at Bannockburn. I abridge the legend of John Syme, who accompanied the Poet on a tour in Galloway:—"I got Burns a grey Highland sheltie to ride on. We dined the first day, July 27, 1793, at Glendinning's of Parton—a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening we walked out and viewed the Alpine scenery around; immediately opposite, we saw Airds, where dwelt Lowe, the author of Mary's Dream. This was classic ground for Burns; he viewed 'the highest bill which rises o'er the source of Dee,' and would have staid till the 'passing spirit' appeared, had we not arrived to reach Kenmore that night. We were assisted as 'the Gordons' were sitting down to supper. Here is a genuine baron's seat; the castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat, and in front the Ken winds for several miles through a fertile and beautiful holm. We spent three days with 'The Gordons,' whose hospitality is of a polished and endearing kind. We left Kenmore and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark—the winds sighed hollow—the lightnings gleamed—the thunders rolled. The Poet enjoyed the awful scene; he spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements rumble their bellyful upon our defenceless heads. We got utterly wet; and, to revenge ourselves, the Poet insisted, at Gatehouse, on our getting utterly drunk. I said that in the midst of the storm, on the wilds of the Kenmore, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army along with Bruce at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner in our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the Address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell."

Two or three plain words, and a stubborn date or two, will go far, I fear, to raise this pleasing legend into the regions of romance. The Galloway adventure, according to Syme, happened in July; but in the succeeding September, the Poet communicated the song to Thomson in these words:—"There is a tradition which I have met with in many places in Scotland, that the old air of 'Hey, tuttie taitie,' was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my *yesternight's evening walk*, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the gallant Royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning. I shewed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me to

make soft verses for it: but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused up my rhyming mania." Currie, to make the letter agree with the legend, altered "*Yesternight's evening walk*" into "*solitary wanderings*." Burns was, indeed, a remarkable man, and yielded, no doubt, to strange impulses: but to compose a song

"In thunder, lightning, and in rain,"

intimates such self-possession as few possess. He thus addressed the Earl of Buchan, to whom he sent a copy of the song:—"Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with anything in history which interests my feelings as a man, equal to the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel, but able, usurper, leading on the first army in Europe to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly-daring and greatly-injured people; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her. Liberty! thou art a prize truly; never canst thou be too dearly bought!" The simplicity and vigour of this most heroic of modern lyrics were injured by lengthening the fourth line of each verse to suit the air of Lewie Gordon.

The "*Vision of Liberty*," and "*Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled*," were to form part of the long-meditated drama of "*The Bruce*." This the Poet intimated to his friends in conversation, and also in pencil memoranda on one of the blank leaves of Collins's poems. Several lines of verse are scattered among the prose—all shewing on what topic he was musing:—

"Where Bannockburn's ensanguined flood,
Swell'd with mingling hostile blood,
Saw Edward's myriads struck with deep dismay,
And Scotia's troop of brothers win their way,
O glorious deed, to brave a tyrant's band!
O heavenly joy, to free our native land!"

[As the letter of Mr. Syme, written soon after the excursion took place, gives an animated picture of the Poet, by a correct and masterly hand, the remainder is now presented to the reader:—

"From Gatehouse, we went next day to Kirkecubright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of *jemmy* boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such a manner that it was not possible to get them on again. The brawny Poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whiffing vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to Saint Mary's Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach

and a head-ach lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accablé*. I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us, how he did fume and rage! Nothing could reinstate him in temper. I tried various expedients, and at last hit on one that succeeded. I showed him the house of * * * *, across the bay of Wigton. Against * * * *, with whom he was offended, he ex-pectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humour indeed! He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one * * * * * whom he does not love. He had a passing blow at him:—

‘When * * * *, deceased, to the devil went down,
‘Twas nothing would serve him but Satan’s own crown :
Thy fool’s head, quoth Satan, that crown shall wear never;
I grant thou’rt as wicked, but not quite so clever.’

“Well, I am to bring you to Kirkcudbright along with our poet, without boots. I carried the torn ruins across my saddle in spite of his fulminations, and in contempt of appearances; and what is more, Lord Selkirk* carried them in his coach to Dumfries. He insisted they were worth mending.

“We reached Kirkcudbright about one o’clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, J. Dalzell. But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humour, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr. Dalzell to dine with us in the inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening we set out for St. Mary’s Isle. Robert had not absolutely regained the milkiness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode along, that St. Mary’s Isle was the seat of a Lord; yet that Lord was not an aristocrat, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o’clock, as the family were at tea and coffee. St. Mary’s Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft, but not tame, object which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But, not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (all beautiful) at home, and some strangers; and, among others, who but Urbani! The Italian sung us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two young ladies of Selkirk sung also. We had the song of Lord Gregory, which I asked for, to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite *his* ballad to that tune. He did recite it, and such was the effect that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced.

“We enjoyed a most happy evening at Lord Selkirk’s. We had, in every sense of the word, a feast, in which our minds and our senses were equally gratified. The Poet was delighted with his company, and acquitted himself to admiration. The lion that had raged so violently in the morning was now as mild and gentle as a lamb. Next day we returned to Dumfries, and so ends our peregrination.”]

The Poet now and then inclined to dramatic composition, and hovered between the serious and the comic.—“I have turned my thoughts,” he says to Lady Glencairn, “on the drama. I do not mean the stately buskin of the tragic muse. Does not your Ladyship think that an Edinburgh theatre would be more amused with the affectation, folly, and whim of true Scottish growth, than by manners which by far the greatest part of the audience can only know at second-hand?” There is no question that dialogues, characters, and songs, such as Burns could conceive and write, would have been welcome to a northern, and perhaps a southern, audience. His inimitable poem, “The Jolly Beggars” shews dramatic powers of a high order.

Burns, in his earlier days, lent his muse as an auxiliary to the western clergy; nor can it be forgotten that she fought the battle with a boldness which was only endured because the cause was thought to be a pious one. In Nithsdale she became a volunteer in a more worldly strife, and lent her breath to augment or allay the flame of a contested election. When Sir James Johnston of Westerhall, in the year 1790, offered himself as a candidate for the Dumfries district of burghs, he was opposed by Patrick Miller, the younger, of Dalswinton. The former was a good man of an old family, and a determined Tory; the latter was a captain in the army, had the promise of youth upon him, and was a resolute Whig. Burns, through the impulse of his genius, was somewhat of a republican. Old jacobitical prejudices, and the kindness of Graham of Fintray, inclined his feelings towards the Tories; while his connexion with Miller, his regard for M’Murdo, his respect for Staig, and his affection for Syme, all combined to draw him towards the Whigs. His election-ballads of this period shew how prudently he balanced the various interests. The first of these compositions is not inappropriately called “The Five Carlins.” The burghs of Dumfries, Lochmaben, Annan, Kirkcudbright, and Sanquhar are cleverly personified in the second verse:—

“There was Maggie by the banks o’ Nith,
A dame wi’ pride enough;
And Marjorie o’ the mony Lochs,
A carlin auld and tough;
And blinkin’ Bess o’ Annandale,
That dwelt by Solway side;

* This was the same Lord Selkirk, of whom Sir Walter Scott

relates an amusing anecdote in his *Malagrowther Letter*.

And whiskey Jean, that took her gill
In Galloway sae wide;
And black Joan, frae Crichton-Peel,
O' gipsy kith and kin:
Five weightier carlins were na found
The south countrie within."

The Border dames hesitate whether to send
"The belted knight" or "The sodger youth to
Lunnun town; to bring them tidings:"—

"Then out spak' mim-mou'd Meg of Nith,
And she spak' up wi' pride;
And she wad send the sodger youth,
Whatever might betide."

Not so honest Kirkcudbright:—

"Then whiskey Jean spak' owre her drink—
'Ye weel ken, kimmers a',
The auld gudeman o' Lunnun court,
His back's been at the wa';
And mony a friend that kissed his caup
Is now a fremit wight,
But it's ne'er be said o' whiskey Jean—
I'll send the Border Knight."

I have heard Sir Walter Scott recite the
verse which personifies Lechmaben, and call it
"uncommonly happy:"—

"Then slow rose Marjorie o' the Lochs,
And wrinkled was her brow;
Her ancient weed was russet grey,
Her auld Scots blood was true."

"The five Carlins," says one of Burns's
biographers, "is by far the best-humoured of
these productions." He had not seen the Poet's
Epistle on the same election, addressed to
Graham of Fintray. The original is before me:
the measure was new to Burns: the poem is, I
believe, new to the reader. The contest was
now decided.—"The Sirens of Flattery," as
the Poet said to M'Murdo, "the Harpies of
Corruption, and the Furies of Ambition—those
infernal deities that preside over the villanous
business of politics"—had retired from the
field:—

"Fintray, my stay in worldly strife,
Friend o' my muse, friend o' my life,
Are ye as idle's I am?
Come then, wi' uncouth, kintra fleg,
O'er Pegasus I'll fling my leg,
And ye shall see me try him."

"I'll sing the zeal Drumlannrig bears,
Who left the all-important cares
Of princes and their darlin's,
And bent on winning borough-touns,
Came shaking hands wi' wabster loons,
And kissin' barefit carlins."

"Combustion through our boroughs rode,
Whistling his roaring pack abroad
Of mad, unmuzzled lions;
As Queensberry's 'buff and blue' unfurl'd,
Bold Westerha' and Hopetoun hurl'd
To every Whig defiance."

The Poet then proceeds to relate how his
Grace of Queensberry forsook the contending
ranks—

"The unmanner'd dust might soil his star,
Besides, he hated bleeding!"

but left his friends, soft and persuasive, behind,
to maintain his cause and Miller's:—

"M'Murdo and his lovely spouse
(The enamour'd laurels kiss her brows!)
Led on the Loves and Graces;
She won each gaping Burgess' heart,
While he, all-conquering, play'd his part
Among their wives and lasses."

"Craigdarroch led a light-arm'd corps,
Tropes, metaphors, and figures pour
Like Hecla streaming thunder;
Glenriddel, skill'd in ready coins,
Blew up each Tory's dark designs,
And bar'd the treason under."

Assistance, of a kind equally effective in all
such contests, it seems, was resorted to:—

"Miller brought up the artillery ranks,
The many-pounders of the banks."

The commotion which ensued, when the con-
tending parties met in the streets of old Dum-
fries is well described:—

"As Highland crags by thunder cleft,
When light'nings fire the stormy lift,
Hurl down with crashing rattle;
As flames among a hundred woods;
As headlong foam a hundred floods—
Such is the rage of battle!"

"The stubborn Tories dare to die,—
As soon the rooted oaks would fly
Before the approaching fellers;
The Whigs come on like Ocean's roar,
When all his wintry billows pour
Against the Buchan-Bullers."

Forms were present, it seems, visible only to the
eyes of the inspired: on the Whig side appear-
ed an ominous personage—

"The muffled murderer of Charles."

Purer spirits, those of the Grahams, were seen
on the side of the Tories. But neither the wit
of woman, the might of man, nor even the pre-
sence of the celestials could hinder the defeat of
Johnston and the triumph of Miller: the Poet
makes his lament:—

"O that my een were flowing burns!
My voice a lioness, that mourns
Her darling cubs' undoing!
That I might weep, that I might cry
While Tories fall, while Tories fly,
And furious Whigs pursuing!"

"Thou, Pitt, shalt rue this overthrow,
And Thurlow growl a curse of woe,
And Melville melt in wailing!
Now Fox and Sheridan rejoice!
And Burke shall sing 'O Prince, arise!
Thy power is all prevailing!'"

"With regard to your poor Bard," says
Burns, "he is only a spectator of what he
relates. Amid the hurly-burly of politics he

resembles the redbreast in the storm, which shelters itself in the hedge and chirps away securely."

In the four years which intervened between this borough contest and the county election, in which Heron of Kerroughtree was opposed by Gordon of Balmaghie, the temper of Burns seems to have suffered a serious change. In his lyrics he still sings with gentleness, and with all the delicacy which becomes true love; but in his election lampoons he is fierce and stern, and even venomous. Heron had erected an altar to Independence, and, through the agency, it is said, of Syme, prevailed on the Poet to bring verse to the aid of his cause. The first of these effusions is a parody on "Fye! let us a' to the bridal." The Poet numbers the friends of the candidates, and as he names them gives us a sketch, personal and mental. The portrait of Heron is happy:—

"And there will be trusty Kerroughtree,
Whose honour was ever his law;
If the virtues were pack'd in a parcel,
His worth might be sample for a'."

The best stanzas are the personal ones, the following verse is very characteristic:—

"And there will be maiden Kilkerran,
And also Barskimmin's guid knight;
And there will be roaring Birtwhistle,
Wha, luckily roars in the right."

He continues his catalogue; he brings "the Maxwells in droves" from the Nithsdale border; the lairds of Terraghty and Caruchan—

"And also the wild Scot of Galloway,
Sodgerin' gunpowder Blair."

In spite of the Poet's song and the exertions of friends, Heron lost his election: he was not, however, daunted: he contested soon after with more success the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright against the Hon. Montgomery Stewart. Burns had still the same belief in the influence of his wit, and was ready with unpremeditated verse. He accordingly imagined himself a pedlar or troggar, and, declaring that his whole stock consisted of

"The broken trade of Broughton,"

proceeded to sell, to all who ventured to buy, the characters of those who supported Stewart. Some of the descriptions of the facetious pedlar are comical enough; he disliked John Stewart, Earl of Galloway, and assailed him, with all the inveteracy of satiric verse:—

"There's a noble earl's
Fame and high renown,
For an auld sang—
It's thought the gudes were stown."

Against the Bushbys he bent the bitterest shafts in his quiver; he allowed them talent: in a former satire he says of one,—

"He has gotten the heart of a Bushby,
But, Lord! what's become of the head?"

He is equally unkind in the present lampoon. Of John Bushby, of Tinwald-downs, the most accomplished of the name, and Maxwell of Cardoness, he says,—

"Here's an honest conscience
Might a prince adorn,
Frae the Downs of Tinwald—
Sae was never worn:
Here's the stuff and lining
O' Cardoness's head;
Fine for a sodger
A' the wale o' lead."

Muirhead, minister of Urr, had an apple for his crest:—

"Here's armorial bearings
Frae the manse of Urr,
The crest—an auld crab apple,
Rotten at the core."

The minister of Buittle was a Maxwell:—

"Here's that little wadset,
Buittle's scrap o' truth,
Paw'd in a gin-shop,
Quenching holy drouth."

To conclude these sharp and personal things, the Poet offers for sale the worth and wisdom of Copland of Collieston, and, more curious still,—

"—Murray's fragments
O' the ten commands."

But customers seem scarce, upon which he exclaims,—

"Hornie's turning chapman,
He'll buy a' the pack."

And so ends his last and bitterest lampoon.—"I have privately," he says to Mr. Heron, "printed a good many copies of both ballads, and have sent them among friends all about the country. You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind on the heads of your opponents; and I swear, by the lyre of Thalia, to muster on your side all the votaries of honest laughter, and fair, candid ridicule!" Heron, on whose side the Poet promised to muster the votaries of mirth, was victorious in the contest; but his return was petitioned against: a Committee of the Commons declared him unduly elected; and, worn in body, and harrassed in mind, he fell ill at York, and died before he reached Scotland.

The wit of Burns, like his native thistle, though rough and sharp, suited the multitude better than more smooth and polished things: he had not the art of cutting blocks with a razor, but dragged his victims rudely along the ground at the tail of his Pegasus. Pointed and elegant satire, while it affected the educated gentlemen against whom it was directed,

would have made no impression on the shepherds and husbandmen whose scorn it was the Poet's wish to excite. The laughter and ridicule which his muse awakened had a local influence only; the satire which drove Dr. Hornbook from the parish, and made Holy Willie think of suicide, had a wider range: the lineaments by which he desired we should know his Stewarts, Maxwells, Murrays, Muirheads, and Bushbys, belonged to private life—were accidents of character or matters of imagination, and pertained not to general nature.

I turn gladly to his lyrics. All his songs bear the impress of nature; he himself tells us in what way he made them.—“Until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing, such as it is, I can never compose for it. My way is this: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming, every now and then, the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fire-side of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging, at intervals, on the hind-legs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures as my pen goes on. Seriously, this at home is almost invariably my way.” He who desires to compose lyric verse according to the character and measure of an air will find the plan of Burns an useful one. The poet must either chant the tune over to himself, or be under its influence while writing, else he will fail to get the emphatic words to harmonize with the emphatic notes.

In the art of uniting gracefully the music and words, Burns was a great master; the song which he wrote in October, 1793, to the tune of “The Quaker's Wife,” echoes the music so truly that the words and air seem to have sprung from his fancy together:—

“Thine am I, my faithful fair,
Thine, my lovely Nancy;
Every pulse along my veins,
Every roving fancy.”

The inspiration which produced “Lovely Nancy” came from Edinburgh; that which gave “Wilt thou be my dearie” to the air of the “Sutor's daughter” belonged to Dumfries. The former is written with warmth—the latter with respect. He delighted little in distant modes of salutation, and was prone to imagine the subject of his song beside him, and sharing in his rapture: now and then, however, he exhibited all the polite respect which the school of chivalrous courtship could desire:—

“Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me;
If it winna, canna be,
Thou for thine may choose me,
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.”

The Lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, inspired the “Banks of Cree,”—less by the charms of her person, than by the music, which is her own composition. Cree is a stream beautiful and romantic:—Cluden is another stream, which runs not smother down the vale of Dalgoun than it runs in the song of “My bonnie dearie.”—

“Hark! the mavis' evening sang,
Sounding Cluden woods amang,
Then a fauldin let us gang,
My bonnie dearie;
We'll gae down by Cluden side,
Thro' the hazels spreading wide,
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly.”

When Burns had done searching old-wives' barrels, or galloping under the light of the moon along the sands of Solway in search of smugglers, he retired to the solitude of his own humble dwelling, or to some lonely place, and, imagining beauty to be present, sung of its influence with equal truth and elegance. The Lass of Craigie-burn-wood seems to have been a favourite model for his heroines; he advises Thomson to adopt his song in her praise, and observes—“The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and, in fact, is to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. I assure you, that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of my best songs. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos equal to the genius of your book? No! no! Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe—the very one that, for his own use, was invented by the god of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman, and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon!”

The offspring of one of these interviews, real or imaginary, was that fine lyric—“She says she lo'es me best of a'.” The lady's portrait is limned with the most exquisite skill; and the last verse contains a landscape such as the

goddess of love might desire to walk in. The lonely valley, the fragrant evening, and the rising moon were frequent witnesses of his poetic rapture :—

"Let others love the city,
And gaudy show at sunny noon,
Gi'e me the lonely valley,
The dewy eve, and rising moon;
Fair beaming, and streaming
Her silver light the boughs amang,
While falling, recalling,
The amorous thrush concludes his sang;
There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows of truth and love,
And say thou lo'es me best of a'."

The influence of this lady's charms was not of short duration.—"On my visit the other day," Burns says, "to my fair Chloris, she suggested an idea which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song :—

'My Chloris, mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair;
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair."

Having composed another pastoral song in praise of the same lady to the tune of "Rothenmurchie's Rant," he says—"This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral; the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If I can catch myself in more than an ordinary propitious moment, I shall write a new 'Craigie-burn-wood' altogether: my heart is much in the theme. The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection; and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much." The air of "Lumps of Pudding" suggested enjoyments of a less ethereal kind than those arising from beauty. On the 19th of November the frost was dry and keen. The Poet took a morning walk before breakfast, and produced one of his most delightful songs :

"Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care,
I gie them a skelp as they're creeping along
Wi' a cog o' guid swats, and an auld Scottish sang.

"I whiles claw the elbow o' troublesome thought,
But man is a sodger, and life is a faught;
My mirth and guid humour are coin in my pouch,
And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch."

When his spirit was in the right mood for song, Burns generally remembered his country: indeed, the glory of Scotland was as dear to his heart as his own fame. This sentiment he gave full utterance to in his song of "Their groves o' sweet myrtle." He muses on the bright summers and perfumed vales of Italy, and then turns to the glen of green breckan, where the burn glimmers under the yellow broom, on whose banks he had held tryste with his Jean. The

conclusion which he makes is at once national and affectionate :—

"Though rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,
And cauld Caledonia's blast on the wave,
Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,
What are they? the haunt of the tyrant and slave.
The slave's spicy forests and gold-bubbling fountains
The brave Caledonian views with disdain;
He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
Save love's willing fetters—the chains of his Jean."

That the Poet loved his country he has shewn in many a lasting verse; but when he thought of the splendid possessions of the mean and the sordid, and of the gold descending in showers on the heads of the dull and the undeserving, it required all his poetic philosophy to hinder him from repining. He had sung in other days of the honest joys and fire-side happiness of husbandmen: he now endeavoured to pour the healing balm of verse upon the wounded spirits of the poor, the humble, and the unhappy. The song of "For a' that, and a' that," must have been welcome to many. It flew like wild-fire over the land: the sentiments accorded with the natural desire of man to be free and equal; and, though not permitted to be sung in the streets of some of our northern borough-towns, it was chanted among the hills and dales by every tongue. Burns introduced it in these words to Thomson:—"A great critic on song, Aikin, says that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme." There are five verses in all, and every one strikes the balance against rank in favour of poverty :—

"A king can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he maurna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toil's obscure and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that!"

Those who judge of the peace of mind and happiness of the Poet by the sentiments of affection and rapture which he expresses so easily and so elegantly in his songs, would imagine that he lived in a sort of paradise, beset by temptation certainly, yet triumphing alike over political hatred and social allurements. His bright outbursts of verse flashed like sunshine amid a winter storm; they were fever-fits of gladness and joy—came too seldom, and their coming could not be calculated upon. The inquisitorial proceedings of the Commissioners of Excise had a deep share in the ruin of Burns. He was permitted to continue on his seventy pounds a-year, with the chance of rising to the station of Supervisor by seniority; but the

hope of becoming Collector could no more be indulged—it was a matter of political patronage. From that time forward, something seemed to prey on the Poet's mind: he believed himself watched and marked; he hurried from company into solitude, and from solitude into company; when alone, he was melancholy and desponding—when at table, his mirth was often wild and obstreperous; he had passionate bursts of pathos and unbridled sallies of humour, more than were natural to him.

He had for some time looked on men of rank with jealousy; he now spoke of them in a way that amounted to dislike.—“Let me remind you,” he thus writes to David Macculloch, Esq. of Ardwell, June 21, “of your kind promise to accompany me to Kerroughtree; I will need all the friends I can muster; for I am indeed ill at ease whenever I approach your honourables and right honourables.” In a letter to his friend Cunningham, he speaks of the concealed dignity which even Scottish lordlings, of seven centuries’ standing, display, when they mix accidentally with the many-aproned sons of mechanical life.—“I remember,” he says, “in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave: how ignorant are plough-boys!” He says to another correspondent, “In times like these, sir, when our commoners are barely able, by the glimmer of their own twilight understandings, to scrawl a frank, and when our lords are what gentlemen would be ashamed to be, to whom shall a sinking country call for help? To the independent country gentleman! to him who has too deep a stake in his country not to be earnest for her welfare: and who, in the honest pride of man, can view, with equal contempt, the insolence of office, and the allurements of corruption.”

Something of the same stern spirit may be found in many places of his correspondence. He seemed to imagine that he could not be in the company of men of rank without having to acknowledge his own inferior condition in life; he did not feel so much as he ought that his genius raised him to an equality with peers, and even princes; or, if he felt it fully, he certainly failed to act up to it. He appeared, too, to apprehend that courtesy on his part might be taken for servility, and he desired to shew, by silent and surly haughtiness, that he might be broken, but would not bend. Even his most intimate friends he now and then put at arms-length; and, if he made a present of a song or a new edition of his poems to any one, he generally recorded it as a gift of affection, and not as an act of homage.—“Will Mr. M'Murdo,” he thus writes on the introductory leaf of a new edition of his poems published at this time, “do me the favour to accept of these volumes? a trifling, but sincere, mark of the very high respect I bear for his worth as a man, his

manners as a gentleman, and his kindness as a friend. However inferior now or afterwards I may rank as a poet, one honest virtue, to which few poets can pretend, I trust I shall ever claim as mine—to no man, whatever his station in life or his power to serve me, have I ever paid a compliment at the expense of truth.”

“There was a great deal of stately toryism,” says Lockhart, “at this time in Dumfries, which was the favourite winter retreat of many of the best gentlemen’s families of the south of Scotland. Feelings that worked more violently in Edinburgh than in London acquired additional energy still in this provincial capital. All men’s eyes were upon Burns. He was the standing marvel of the place; his toasts, his jokes, his epigrams, his songs, were the daily food of conversation and scandal; and he, open and careless, and thinking he did no great harm in saying and singing what many of his superiors had not the least objection to hear and to applaud, soon began to be considered, among the local admirers and disciples of the good King and his great Minister, as the most dangerous of all the apostles of sedition, and to be shunned accordingly.”]

The witty boldness of his remarks, and the sarcastic freedom of his opinions in matters both of church and state, it must be confessed, were such as to startle the timid and alarm the devout. He was numbered among those who were possessed with a republican spirit, and all who had any hopes of rising, through political influence, were more willing to find Burns by chance, than seek his company of their own free will. This will account for the coldness with which many of the stately aristocracy of the district regarded him. Mr. David Macculloch, a son of the Laird of Ardwell, has been heard to relate that, on visiting Dumfries one fine evening, to attend a ball given during the week of the races, he saw Burns walking on the south side of the “plain-stanes,” while the central part was crowded with ladies and gentlemen, drawn together for the festivities of the night. Not one of them took any notice of the Poet; on which Mr. Macculloch went up to him, took his arm, and wished him to join the gentry.—“Nay, nay, my young friend,” he said, “that’s all over with me now;” and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie’s pathetic ballad:—

“His bonnet stood aye fu’ fair on his brow,
His auld ane look’d better than many ane’s new;
But now he let’s wear any way it will hing.
And casts himself dowie upen the corn-bing

“O! were we young now as we ance ha been,
We should hae been galloping doun on yon green,
And linking it owre the lily-white lea,—
And were na my heart light I wad die.”

[“It was little in Burns’s character,” says Lockhart, “to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after

citing these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner.”]

He took his friend home; and while Mrs. Burns, with her sweet and melodious voice, sung one of her husband's latest lyrics, the Poet prepared a bowl of social punch, which they discussed with no little mirth and glee till the hour of the ball arrived. A gentleman, the other day, told me that when he visited Dumfries in the year 1793, he was warned by one or more of the leading men of the county to avoid the society of Burns, who neither believed in religion as the kirk believed, nor took the fashion of his politics from the government.

Burns imputed his disgrace in the Excise to the officers of a regiment then lying in Dumfries, some of whom, he believed, informed the government of his rash language. That he seldom spoke of them but with bitterness and scorn, his correspondence will in some places witness.—“I meant,” he thus writes to Mrs. Riddel, “to have called on you yesternight; but, as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my rustic phiz a part of your box furniture on Tuesday.”

His dislike of soldiers found its way into his conversation.—“When I was at Arbigland in 1793,” said my accomplished friend Mrs. Basil Montagu, “I was introduced to Burns. His conversation pleased me much, and I saw him often. I was at a ball given by the Caledonian Hunt in Dumfries, and had stood up as the partner of a young officer in the dance, when the whisper of ‘There's Burns!’ ran through the assembly. I looked round, and there he was—his bright dark eyes full upon me. I shall never forget that look—it was one that gave me no pleasure. He soon left the meeting. I saw him next day. He would have passed me, but I spoke. I took his arm, and said, Come, you must see me home. ‘Gladly, madam,’ said he; ‘but I'll not go down the plain-stanes, lest I have to share your company with some of those epauletted puppies with whom the street is full. Come this way.’ We went to Captain Hamilton's. Burns, I remember, took up a newspaper in which some of the letters of a man of genius lately dead were printed. ‘This is sad,’ he said: ‘did I imagine that one-half of the letters which I have written would be published when I die, I would this moment recal them, and burn them without redemption.’” Colonel Jenkinson, who commanded the Cinque-Ports Cavalry, inherited, it would seem, the dislike of his brother soldiers to the Poet; he refused to be introduced to Burns, and never even spoke to him. This was not in keeping with the character of the mild and gentle Earl of Liverpool.

Of his situation as an Exciseman, Burns seldom spoke with much cordiality. He generally introduced it with an apology, and coupled it with something which carried the mind into a new train of thought. “Amid all my hurry of business,” he writes to Cunningham, “grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise—making ballads, and then drinking and singing them, I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of friends and fellow-creatures.” Two years afterwards he writes with some bitterness:—“I am a miserable hurried devil, and for private reasons, am forced, like Milton's Satan,

‘To do what yet, though damn'd, I would abhor.’”

Of his prospects as a revenue officer we have his own account given to Patrick Heron, whom he had aided at the hustings with election squibs.—“I am on the supervisor's list; and, as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of the list, and be appointed, of course. Then a FRIEND might be of service to me in getting me into a part of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about one hundred and twenty to two hundred a-year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list, and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies from better than two hundred a-year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list, and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, nor would not be indebted to, a political friend. At the same time, sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence.” This modest vision of literary independence might have been realized had the Poet been prudent, and government liberal.

During this period of the life of Burns, and indeed as early as the close of the year 1792, some of his friends, hearkening to rumours injurious to his name, volunteered counsel or reproof. The wreck of all his speculations and hopes preyed on his mind, and he sought to escape in company from his own reflections. To one of his sensibility of mind, the future loomed ominous and dark. The company of a man of his eminence, and wonderful colloquial powers, was much in request; for many loved his genius, and many did not fear the frowns of men in office. Mrs. Dunlop was the first that admonished.—“You must not think, as you

seem to insinuate," replied the Poet, "that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough: but occasional hard-drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned. It is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this county, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over." The view which Burns takes of his situation is illustrated by an apology tendered to Mrs. Riddel, after a social bout at her too hospitable table.—"I write you," he says, "from the regions of hell, amid the horrors of the damned. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, while an infernal tormentor, wrinkled and cruel, called Recollection, with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. I wish I could be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle, whom my conduct last night so much offended! To the men of the company I will make no apology. Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me, and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt." The Poet erred as others erred.

It must have surprised Burns not a little when William Nicol lifted up his voice and admonished him. The Poet answered, in a manner so cutting and ironical that the irascible pedant was silent ever afterwards.—"O! thou, wisest among the wise, meridian blaze of prudence, full moon of discretion, and chief of many counsellors! How infinitely is thy rattle-headed, wrong-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that, from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon to the cloudless glory of a summer's sun! Sorely sighing, in bitterness of soul, I say, when shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills—that father of proverbs and master of maxims—that antipode of folly and magnet among the sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol? As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy—never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness, and the pleasures of darkness, pollute the sacred flame of thy sky-descended and heaven-bound desires. O! that like thine were the tenor of my life! like thine the tenor of my conversation—then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness!"

The indifferent success of Nicol seems not to have awed John Syme, who, in his parlour at Ryedale, one afternoon, when the wine flowed, and the Poet was gracious and confidential, took upon him the ungentle task of admonishing his guest.—"I might have spoken daggers," said he, "but I did not mean them: Burns shook to the inmost fibres of his frame, and drew his sword-cane, when I exclaimed, 'What! wilt thou thus, and in mine own house?' The poor fellow was so stung with remorse that he dashed himself down on the floor." Syme told the story, in a rather darker manner, to Sir Walter Scott, who thus related it in one of his criticisms.—"It is a dreadful truth, that, when racked and tortured by the well-meant and warm expostulations of an intimate friend, he started up in a paroxysm of frenzy, and, drawing a sword-cane which he usually wore, made an attempt to plunge it into the body of his adviser—the next instant he was with difficulty withheld from suicide." I have heard a much gentler version of the story: indeed it has several variations, and a biographer has some latitude of choice. This is the last and mildest.—"When I expostulated with Burns," says Syme, "he stared at me, and with such fury of look that, had a sword been in his hand, I am sure he would have run me through." I cannot disprove the story, nor yet can I altogether believe it. The Poet was far more likely, when deeply moved, to draw his sword upon himself than on his friend: but though only, perhaps, a sort of theatrical flourish, the impression on Syme was that he meant mischief. This strange tale induced some to believe that Burns was capable of drawing his sword on the unarmed and defenceless!

Those who are persuaded of that will feel disposed to doubt his courage in a dispute into which he was precipitated, during a drinking bout at a friend's table. "I was, I know," he says, "drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Captain——made use of to me, had I nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manner of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not risk the peace and welfare of a wife and children in a drunken squabble. You know that the report of certain political opinions being mine has already brought me to the brink of destruction. I dread last night's business might be interpreted the same way. You, I beg, will take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for my welfare with that of waiting, as soon as possible, on every gentleman who was present, and state this to him, and, as you please, shew him this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast? 'May our success in the present war be

equal to the justice of our cause.' A toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to."

I know not what the import of those words were at that period: they seem harmless enough now; but a disloyal meaning seems to have been attached to them by some gunpowder captain, who desired to find that practice at home among civilians which he might have obtained from disciplined hands abroad. He seems to have felt that some insult to the government was meant, though he did not exactly understand what, and bit his glove in token of mortal wrath. With the morning, sobriety brought reflection to both sides; and Clarke found little trouble in restoring harmony, which is lucky; for, had a duel ensued, the Poet's biographer would have experienced some difficulty in accounting for it. A handsome pair of pistols, with latchlocks, brass-barrelled and screwed, were at this time given to the Poet by Blair of Birmingham—his acknowledgments were brief and Burns-like, "Sir, I have received and proved the pistols, and can say of them what I would not say of the bulk of mankind—they are a credit to their maker."

Amid these intemperate quarrels and political heart-burnings, the muse of Burns was not wholly idle; confounded though she no doubt was, with the unmelodious and mingled cries of loyalty and sedition, which filled every borough town, she not only inspired lyrics, tender and harmonious, but added a poem or two to those already published. Among the latter are some felicitous verses to "The Maxwell's' veteran chief," the Laird of Terraughty, on his birthday.

"If envious buckies view wi' sorrow
Thy lengthen'd days on this blest morrow,
May Desolation's lang-teeth'd harrow,
Nine miles an hour,
Rake them like Sodom and Gomorrha
In brunstane stoure."

The true spirit of the Poet flashes out also in his "Address to the Tooth-ache:" there are few who cannot attest the accuracy of the description:—

"My curse upon thy venom'd stang,
That shoots my tortur'd gums along,
And through my lugs gies mony a twang,
Wi' gnawing vengeance,
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,
Like racking engines!"

"Of a' the num'rous human dools,
Ill har'st, daft bargains, cutty-stools,
Or worthy friends rak'd i' the mools,
Sad sight to see!
The tricks o' knaves, or fash o' fools,—
Thou bear'st the gree."

It was now his pleasure to satirize the beautiful Maria Woodleigh—Mrs. Riddel. How this fair and favoured lady happened to move his indignation, is something of a mystery. She was young and accomplished: her verses have more of nature in them than the ordinary lines

of lady-poetesses; and her letters are lively and witty, and partake not a little of the sarcastic turn of the Poet's own mind. On introducing her, in 1793, to Smellie, Burns said, "She has one unlucky failing—a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it—and a failing which you will easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself. Where she dislikes or despises, she is as apt to make no more a secret of it than where she esteems and respects." In a rhyme epistle Burns seems to complain that this young beauty paid more respect to others than to himself:—

"I see her face the first of Ireland's sons,
And even out-Irish his Hibernian bronze.
The hopeful youth in Scotia's senate bred,
Who owns a Bushby's heart without the head;
Comes, 'mid a string of coxcombs to display,
That veni, vidi, vici! is his way.
The shrinking Bard adown an alley skulks,
And dreads a meeting worse than Woolwich hulks:
Though there, his heresies in church and state
Might well award him Muir and Palmer's fate."

Though severe in this poem, for he calls her

"A wit in folly, and a fool in wit,"

he reserves his sharpest satire for a regular monody on her memory: he looks on her grave, and exclaims—

"How cold is that bosom which folly once fir'd,
How pale is that cheek where the rouge lately glister'd!
How silent that tongue which the echoes oft tir'd,
How dull is that ear which to flattery so listen'd!"

He refrains from calling on the Loves and Graces to attend, but summons the offspring of Folly to shower over her idle weeds and typical nettles. He then imagines a monument:—

"We'll sculpture the marble, we'll measure the lay—
Here vanity strums on her idiot lyre;
There keen Indignation shall dart on her prey,
Which spurning Contempt shall redeem from his ire."

This sarcastic monody was widely circulated; nor was the object of it kept a secret. In the printed copies the name is Eliza—but why should the truth be concealed? It is to the honour of Mrs. Riddel that, though affected at the lampoon at first, she soon relented, and not only forgave the author and received him into favour, but when laid in the grave, and the envious and malicious were making mouths at his fame, she vindicated his aspersed character; and, in an article written with great tenderness and truth, gave us the right image of the man and the poet.

In the following year Britain was threatened by an army of French republicans, and Pitt, in the words of Scott,

"Brought the freeman's arm to aid the freeman's laws."

Burns at once enrolled himself in the bands of gentlemen volunteers of Dumfries, though not without opposition from some of the haughty Tories, who demurred about his principles,

which they called democratic. I remember well the appearance of that respectable corps: their odd, but not ungraceful, dress; white kerseymere breeches and waistcoat; short blue coat, faced with red; and round hat, surmounted by a bearskin, like the helmets of our horse-guards; and I remember the Poet also—his very swarthy face, his very ploughman-stoop, his large dark eyes, and indifferent dexterity in the handling of his arms. When those "sons of sedition, Syme, Burns, and Maxwell," as a dull epigram of that day worded it, were admitted into the volunteers, it was not without hope that a heroic song, rivalling "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," might be forthcoming. At a public dinner of the corps, when Burns desired leave to give a toast, the proposal was received with rapturous applause, and something high was hoped for.—"Gentlemen," said he, "may we never see the French, and may the French never see us?" it was drunk, but with a murmur of disapprobation. The poet felt this; and, on going home, wrote that characteristic and truly national song—"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?" He sent it to Jackson's Dumfries Journal—a great number of copies were struck off with the music, in Edinburgh, and widely circulated by the author.

This lyric may be looked on as containing the sentiments of Burns in matters of government: it re-echoed the admirable letter which he addressed to Erskine of Mar, and expressed what all lovers of Britain felt then, or feel now, on the subject of change and alteration—

"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?

Then let the louns beware, sir,
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, sir;
The Nith shall rin to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally!

"O! let us not like snarling tykes,

In wrangling be divided,
Till, slap, come in an unco loun,
And wi' a rung decide it.
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Among ourselves united;
For never but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted!"

This song hit the taste and suited the feelings of the humbler classes, who added it to "The poor and honest Sodger," the "Song of Death," and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." Hills echoed with it: it was heard in every street, and did more to right the mind of the rustic part of the population than all the speeches of Pitt and Dundas, or of the chosen "Five-and-forty."

At Midsummer, 1794, Burns removed his increasing family from the Bank-Vennel to Mill-hole-brae, where he leased a small house of two stories, plain and humble, but commodious. This street is connected with a wide and

respectable one, called the Kirk-gate; is near the bleaching or parade-ground, on the river-side—a favourite walk in the summer mornings and evenings for the citizens of Dumfries. The choice, though respectable enough, was not a poetical one; but the house suited his humble circumstances; and here he arranged his small library, fixed his table, and placed the chair, on whose hind-legs, as he relates, he poised or swung himself, when conceiving his matchless lyrics. Here, too, I have heard his townsmen say, while passing by during a pleasant afternoon, they could see, within the open door, the Poet reading amongst his children: while his wife moved about, set matters in order, and looked to the economy of her household. He was welcomed to his new house by most of his early friends; and the ladies, who sympathized in his fortunes, were among the foremost. Of these, one of the mildest and gentlest was Jessie Lewars, now Mrs. Thomson, the sister of a brother gauger: she felt the genius, and perceived, with Mrs. Burns, the fading looks and declining health of the Poet, and ministered unto him and his young family with all the affection of a daughter.

Burns still continued to correspond with several distinguished persons; the circle of his friends had, however, gradually diminished; the demon of politics made some cold; distance rendered others forgetful; and death had removed one or two to whom he looked up for countenance and support. Riddel of Friars-Carse, in whose company he took much pleasure, died towards the close of 1794: and the last time that Burns was in that neighbourhood, he visited the Hermitage, and wrote on the window,—

"To Riddel, much lamented man,
This ivied cot was dear;
Reader, dost value matchless worth?
This ivied cot revere."

Sickness and death came next to the Poet's own household.—"I have lately," says he to Mrs. Dunlop, "drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever; and long the die spun doubtful, until, after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed, have been before my own door in the street." To the same lady he again writes, as he ever wrote to her, in a strain of serious thought and deep emotion:—"There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father; for, God knows, they have many peculiar cures. I cannot describe to you the an-

xious, sleepless hours these ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate—even in all the vigour of manhood, as I am, such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock? 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune."

The poet was now and then in a more sportive mood; despondency was lifted from him like a cloud, and his mind lay in sunshine for an hour or so, till reflection darkened it down again. He loved to ponder on the fate of men of genius.—"There is not," he said to Helen Craik, of Arbigland, "among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind; give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility—which, between them, will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary—such as arranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; lastly, fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity—and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet."

Burns looked with a mistrusting eye towards future fortune; he saw no outlet for his ambition; poetry had done all for him that poetry was likely to do; and he desired distinction without the means of gratifying it. He sometimes lamented to friends that he could not find his way into the House of Commons; he felt a strong call towards oratory, and all who heard him speak—and some of them were excellent judges—admitted his wonderful quickness of apprehension and readiness of eloquence. He seemed inclined to believe that misfortune had marked him out for her own, and that evil was the only certainty in life.—"In this short, stormy, day of fleeting existence," he observes to Miss Benson, "when you now and then meet with an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you that you will never meet with that character more. On the other hand, if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill run of chances will be so against you that, in the jostlings and turnings of life, pop, at some unlucky corner, eternally

comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt one moment's repose."

It cannot be denied that Burns had a fancy fruitful in images of misery—that he looked on earth, and thought the water nought and the ground barren, and believed its surface to be infested with a hundred dolts and scoundrels for one wise and honest man.—"Sunday," says the Poet to Mrs. Riddell, "closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen till noon—fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a species of the human genus that I call the gin-horse class: what amiable dogs they are! round, and round, and round they go. Mundell's ox that turns his cotton-mill is their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a damned melange of fretfulness and melancholy, not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement like a wildfinch caught amid the horrors of winter and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied when he foretold: 'And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!'"

A circumstance occurred in the winter of this year to strengthen those gloomy presentiments. Burns, accompanied by his friends, the Richardsons of Dumfries, went to Moffat, a distance of fifteen miles, to spend the day and dine. The morning was rough and cold; the bridge, too, over the Kinnel was tottering and unsafe, and they were obliged to pass the flooded water, which they accomplished not without difficulty and danger; the Poet was in one of his sunniest moods, and laughed alike at storm and stream, and in this temper the party sat down to dinner. "We were all in high spirits," said Archibald Richardson, "and were waited on by a young man not unknown to us, of the name of Glendinning, who said he was to be married in a day or two. This gave a new turn to the conversation. Burns desecanted with much humour and uttered many merry jokes on matrimony: the bridegroom smiled, and was pleased to be noticed, and we were in the full tide of enjoyment, when, on removing the last dish, he took a step towards the door, dropped down at our feet, and died without uttering a word. I never saw a man so much affected as the Poet was; the brightness of his eye was gone at once: his face darkened; he rose and he sat down: he looked at my brother and he looked at me; he refused wine, nor did he speak above his breath for the remainder of the evening; he seemed afraid of offending the spirit of the dead. In this mood we journeyed home; and Burns afterwards declared

to me, that the death of Glendinning coloured with sadness some of his best compositions."

During the year 1795, rumour was busy with the name of Burns. Those—and I am sorry to say they were not few—who longed for his halting, whispered about that he was become a lover of low company—a seeker of consolation against imaginary woes, in the bottle; and that in his Howff, as he called the Globe tavern, he forgot what was due to his dignity of mind and his domestic peace; nay, they hesitated not to insinuate that his very genius was sunk and fallen, like Milton's Satan, from its original brightness. Much of this required no refutation. Burns was fallen off, indeed!—not in brightness of genius, but in vigour and health. His walks were shorter, his rests more frequent; his smile had something of melancholy in it, and amid the sons of men he looked like one marked out for an early grave. My friend, Mrs. Hyslop—daughter of Mr. Geddes of Leith—happened to meet him one day in the streets of Dumfries, and was affected by his appearance. He stooped more than was his wont; his dress, about which he used to be rather nice, was disordered and shabby, and he bore on his face the stamp of internal sorrow. The meeting was cordial and warm; on parting he wrung her brother, who accompanied her, earnestly by the hand, turned half away from him, and said, "I am going to ruin as fast as I can; the best I can do is to go consistently."

At this period some of the lofty aristocracy of the country shunned the Poet's company, not for his conduct as a man, but for his sentiments as a politician. That Burns was frequently in the company of the tradesmen of Dumfries, and joined in their socialities, is perfectly true; his small income hindered him from seeking loftier society: he who has only a shilling in his pocket must be contented with humble friends. But it is untrue that this was the only company he kept; some of the first gentlemen in the land were still his friends; he was a welcome and an invited guest at their tables, and might be seen walking with their wives and their daughters, when his health enabled him to go abroad.

The best answer, which such malevolent representations could receive, has been given by Gray and Findlater; both of these gentlemen lived near the Poet; they were wise and sensible men, and incapable of misrepresentation.—"It came under my own view professionally," said the former, "that Burns superintended the education of his children with a degree of care that I have never seen surpassed. In the bosom of his family he spent many an hour, directing the studies of his eldest son, a boy of uncommon talents. I have frequently found him explaining to this youth, then not more than nine years of age, the poets from Shakspeare to Grey, or storing his mind with exam-

ples of heroic virtue, as they live in the pages of the English historians. I would ask any person of common candour, if employments like these are consistent with habitual drunkenness? It is not denied that he sometimes mingled with society unworthy of him; he was of a social and convivial nature. In his morning hours, I never saw him like one suffering from the effects of last night's intemperance." Almost the last words that Gray uttered to me before he went to India were about Burns:—"I was sometimes surprised," he said, "at the vigour and elegance of Robert's versions from the Latin. I told him he got help; he looked up in my face and said, 'Yes, my father helps me.'"

The testimony of Findlater is equally decisive:—"My connexion with Burns," he observed, "commenced immediately after his admission to the Excise, and continued to the hour of his death. In all that time the superintendence of his behaviour, as an officer of the revenue, was a branch of my especial province, and I was not an inattentive observer of the general conduct of a man and a Poet so celebrated by his countrymen. He was exemplary in his attention, and was even jealous of the least imputation on his vigilance. It was not till near the latter end of his days that there was any falling off in this respect; and this was well accounted for by the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. I will further avow that I never saw him—which was very frequently while he lived at Ellisland, and still more so, almost every day, after he removed to Dumfries—in hours of business, but he was quite himself, and capable of discharging the duties of his office; nor was he ever known to drink by himself, or seen to indulge in the use of liquor in a forenoon. I have seen Burns in all his various phases—in his convivial moments, in his sober moods, and in the bosom of his family. Indeed, I believe I saw more of him than any other individual had occasion to see, and I never beheld anything like the gross enormities with which he has been charged. That when he sat down in the evening with friends whom he liked he was apt to prolong the social hours beyond the bounds which prudence would dictate, is unquestionable; but in his family, I will venture to say, he was never seen otherwise than as attentive and affectionate in a high degree."

The recollections of my friend Dr. Copland Hutchison are equally in the Poet's favour:—"I lived in Dumfries," he observed in a late conversation, "during the whole period that Burns lived there; I was much about, and saw him almost daily, but I never saw him even the worse of liquor; he might drink as much as other men, but certainly not more."

Professor Walker, a gentleman of unquestioned candour, was two days in the Poet's company, during November, 1795.—"I went to

Dumfries," he says, "and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house; he was sitting on a window-seat, reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that appearance of snuggles and seclusion which a studious man requires. After conversing with him for some time, he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favourite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed; these I thought inferior to his other pieces, though they had some lines in which vigour compensated for coarseness. He repeated also a fragment of an Ode to Liberty, with marked and peculiar energy, and shewed a disposition, which was easily repressed, to make political remarks."

To this picture of the first day I shall add a sketch of the second:—"On the next morning I returned with a friend, and we found him ready to pass part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion I did not think him so interesting as he had appeared at his outset. His conversation was too elaborate; in his praise and censure he was so decisive as to render a dissent from his judgment difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good breeding. His wit was not more licentious than it is in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. When it began to grow late he shewed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn, and no condition had been made, though it might have been inferred—had the inference been welcome—that he was to consider himself as our guest: nor was it till he saw us worn out that he departed, about three in the morning, with a reluctance that probably proceeded less from being deprived of our company than from being confined to his own. I discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stood high in the favour of society. He on this occasion drank freely, without being intoxicated; a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials. Had he tasted liquor in the morning he must have easily yielded to the excess of the evening." A grave Professor was not likely to speak in commendation of the late hours and deep socialities practised by the Dumfries-shire toppers; men in those days seldom quitted the bottle or the punch-bowl before day-light came to shew the way home; and it was likely that Burns imagined he was asserting a proper independence, when he desired more liquor and consulted his own inclination.

New-year's-day, 1796, found the Poet under a triple visitation of poverty, domestic sorrow, and ill health: it is not known that he uttered any complaints; if he desired life it was less for himself than for his wife and children. There is something to me inexpressibly touching in the request which he made to his collector and pay-master, Mitchell, for the humble stipend then due, and without which he would have been unable to meet the new year's morning. To render it more acceptable he made it in rhyme:—

"Friend of the Poet, tried and leal,
Wha, wanting thee, might beg or steal;
Alake! alake! the meikle deil,
Wi' a' his witches,
Are at it, skelpin' jig and reel,
In my poor pouches!"

To this request, which it seems he hesitated to make, Burns added a mournful postscript concerning his health:—

"Ye've heard this while how I've been licket,
And by fell death was nearly nicket
Grim loon! he gat me by the focket,
And sair me sheuk;
But by guid luck I lap a wicket,
And turned a neuk."

His illness now alarmed his friends. Maxwell, with equal skill and kindness of heart, attended him carefully: De Peyster, his colonel, a rough veteran, and a rhymist if not a poet, visited him and made frequent inquiries: the ailing man was touched with these attentions, and thanked his commander in verse. I shall transcribe a couple of stanzas—he is always his own best biographer:—

"My honoured colonel, deep I feel
Your interest in the Poet's weal:
Ah! now sma' heart hae I to speel
The steep Parnassus,
Surrounded thus by bolus, pill,
And potion glasses."

This world, he goes on to say, would be pleasant, if care and sickness would stay away, and fortune favour worth and merit according to their deservings—the strain concludes sadly:—

"Dame Life, though fiction out may trick her,
And in paste gems, and frippery deck her;
Oh! flickering, feeble, and unsicker
I've found her still,
Ay wavering like the willow-wicker,
"Tween guid and ill."

In his lines to Mitchell, Burns seems to acknowledge—for he never spared himself—that he owed some of his illness to folly: in his verses to De Peyster he intimates his meaning more clearly, and blames, but good-humouredly, the spirit of evil—

"First shewing us the tempting ware,
Bright wines, and bonnie lasses rare,
To put us daft."

Thomson began to feel alarm at the ominous silence of the Poet, and inquired the cause;

the answer was written in April.—“Alas! I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again. ‘By Babel’s streams I’ve sat and wept,’ almost ever since I wrote you last: I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say, with poor Fergusson—

‘Say, wherefore has an all-indulgent Heaven
Light to the comfortless and wretched given?’”

The inquiries of Thomson induced his fancy once more to take flight in song: Burns had formerly, in health, sung of beauty with

“Checks like apples, which the sun had ruddied,”

and adorned with smiles: he looked around, and seeing Jessie Lewars watching over him, with anxiety on her brow and tenderness in her eyes, he honoured her with one of his happiest songs; it bears her name, and is the last perfect offspring of his muse. In all the compass of verse there is nothing more touching than this exquisite stanza:—

“Altho’ thou maun never be mine,
Altho’ even hope is denied;
‘Tis sweeter for thee despairing
Than aught in the world beside.”

As the same young lady was moving with a light foot about the house, lest she should disturb him, the Poet took up a crystal goblet which contained wine and water for moistening his lips, and wrote on it with a diamond,—

“Fill me with the rosy wine:
Call a toast—a toast divine;
Give the Poet’s darling flame,
Lovely Jessie be the name;
Then thou mayest freely boast
Thou hast given a peerless toast.”

Though now and then well enough to walk out in the sunshine, or visit a neighbour, Burns was no longer able to do his duties in the Excise. Mr. Stobie,* a young expectant in the Excise, kindly undertook to perform them for him, else the Poet might have starved; for it is the rule—and a cruel and unjust one—in the Customs, to give but half-pay to the sick or those unable to work. When the birth-day of the king came, his friend Mrs. Riddel, desirous of soothing or pleasing him, requested him to accompany her to the assembly held in the evening, and shew his loyalty.—“I am,” said he, “in such miserable health as to be incapable of shewing my loyalty in any way. Racked as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every

face with a greeting like that of Balak to Balaam,—‘Come, curse me, Jacob; and come defy me Israel!’ So say I—come, curse me that east wind, and come, defy me the north! Would you have me, in such circumstances, copy you out a love-song? I will not be at the ball. Why should I? ‘Man delights not me, nor woman neither.’ Can you supply me with the song, ‘Let us all be unhappy together?’ do so, and oblige *le pauvre* miserable, Robert Burns.”

Well or ill, his heart was still with the muse. He began to feel that he was soon to pass from among the living, and became solicitous about his fame.—“I have no copies of the songs I sent you,” he says to Thomson, “and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so, when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for the originals, or copies. I had rather be the author of five well-written songs than of ten otherwise.” This request refers to those lyrics hitherto unpublished, of which Thomson had nearly fifty; it is needless to say that this revival the Poet did not live to perform.

To Johnson, proprietor of the Museum, Burns wrote on the 4th of July,—“You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but, alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy upon me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more—though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow-consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt not, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well nigh reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit or the pathos of sentiment. However, hope is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can.” His sun of life was descending to the setting.

The summer warmth wrought no change in his suffering frame; and he was advised, about the close of June, to go into the country. I believe Burns followed his own feelings rather than the counsel of his physician, when he took up his residence at a lonely place called The Brow, on the shore of Solway in Annandale, resolved to try the effects of bathing in the sea—a remedy recommended in almost all cases by our rustic doctors. It happened at that time that Mrs. Riddel was residing near The Brow; she was herself ailing. On hearing of the Poet’s arrival, she invited him to dinner, and

* [Mr. Chambers recollects this amiable man in the station of an ordinary exciseman at Pinkie salt-pans, about the year 1817. The only fragment of his conversation respecting Burns, which he can now recall, is what he said of the Poet’s

singing powers. “He sang like a nightingale,” said Stobie (meaning that he had no reluctance nor hesitation in singing; “but he had the voice of a boar.”)]

sent her carriage for him to the cottage where he lodged, as he was unable to walk.

"I was struck," said she, "with his appearance on entering the room: the stamp of death was impressed on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first words were, 'Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph. (I was then in a poor state of health.) He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his usual sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and serious conversation about his present state, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death, with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in the hourly expectation of lying-in of a fifth. He shewed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him, to the injury of his future reputation; that letters and verses, written with unguarded freedom, would be handed about by vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, nor prevent malice or envy from pouring forth their venom to blast his fame. The conversation was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater, or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection, I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed willing to indulge. We parted about sun-set on the evening of the 5th of July; the next day I saw him again, and we parted—to meet no more!"

The house which he occupied at The Brow is at a little distance from the sea, and its windows opened towards the west; at one of these it was the Poet's practice to sit during the afternoon, looking at the visitors as they passed, and at the sun as it descended on the distant hills. One fine evening two young ladies called to see him: the sun streamed brightly on him through the glass, when one of them (Miss Craig—afterwards Mrs. Henry Duncan) was afraid the light might be too much for him, and rose, with the view of letting down the window-blinds. Burns immediately guessed what she meant to do, and, regarding the young lady with a look of great benignity, said,

"Thank you, my dear, for your kind attention; but oh! let him shine!—he will not shine long for me!"

With how little advantage to his health he bathed in the Solway may be gathered from his letter to Cunningham, of the 7th July.—"Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the Bard will soon be heard among you no more! For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You would actually not know me if you saw me. Pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled! fled!—but I can no more on this subject.—I beg of you to use your utmost interest, and that of all your friends, to move our Commissioners of Excise to grant me my full salary. If they do not grant it, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poete*—if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger." The Excise refused this last humble boon.

On the 10th of July, he thus writes to his brother Gilbert:—"It will be no very pleasing news to you to be told that I am dangerously ill, and not likely to get better. An inveterate rheumatism has reduced me to such a state of debility, and my appetite is so totally gone, that I can scarcely stand on my legs. God help my wife and children! If I am taken from their head, they will be poor indeed. Remember me to my mother." To his wife he writes,—"No flesh nor fish can I swallow; porridge and milk are the only things I can taste. I am very happy to hear by Miss Jessie Lewars that you are all well. My very best compliments to her and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband, ROBERT BURNS." He likewise wrote to James Armour of Mancline, his father-in-law, saying that his dear wife was nigh her confinement; that his days were numbered, for he felt himself dying, and requesting that Mrs. Armour might hasten to Dumfries, to speak and look comfort to them.

Burns had formerly, when his hopes were higher and his health good, made it almost a quarrel with Thomson that he had sent him five pounds in acknowledgment of his songs. His situation, in all respects, was changed now; he had to bend his proud heart to beg from the Excise the continuance of his pay; and he had to lay himself under obligations to Stobie, who generously performed his duties gratis. He had no money in his pocket, and little food in his house; and, to aggravate these evils, one Williamson, to whom he owed the price of the cloth of his volunteer regimentals, threatened to sue him for the amount. The Poet was alarmed at this; and on the 12th of July wrote to Thomson, saying, "After all my boasted independence, cunctious necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel haberdasher, to whom

I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness; but the horrors of a jail have made me half-distracted." To render this very modest request more acceptable, the Poet, ill as he was, tried his hand on the air of *Rothemurche*; and, allowing his mind to wander to scenes of former happiness, and to one whom he had loved, composed the last song he was to measure in this world, beginning, "Fairest maid on Devon banks." It is written in a character indicating the feeble state of his bodily strength.

Thomson instantly complied with the request of Burns: he borrowed a five-pound note* from Cunningham, and sent it, saying he had made up his mind to enclose the identical sum the Poet had asked for when he received his letter. For this he has been sharply censured; and his defence is that he was afraid of sending more, lest he should offend the pride of the Poet, who was uncommonly sensitive in pecuniary matters. A better defence is Thomson's own poverty; only one volume of his splendid work was then published; his outlay had been beyond his means, and very small sums of money had come in to cover his large expenditure. Had he been richer, his defence would have been a difficult matter. When Burns made the stipulation, his hopes were high, and the dread of hunger, or of the jail, was far from his thoughts; he imagined that it became genius to refuse money in a work of national importance. But his situation grew gloomier as he wrote; he had lost nearly his all in *Ellisland*, and was obliged to borrow small sums, which he found a difficulty in repaying. That he was in poor circumstances was well known to the world; and, had money been at Thomson's disposal, a way might have been found of doing the Poet good by stealth; he sent five pounds, because he could not send ten; and it would have saved him from some sarcastic remarks, and some pangs of heart, had he said so at once.

On the same day that Burns wrote to Thomson he also wrote to Mrs. Dunlop, and to his cousin, James Burness, of Montrose. To the latter he said, "A rascal of a haberdasher, to whom I owe a considerable bill, believes that I am dying, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as to accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds? O, James! did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me! Alas! I am not used to beg! O, do not disappoint me!—save me from the horrors of a jail!" To Mrs. Dunlop he said, "I have written to you so often without receiving any answer that I would not trouble you

again but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that 'bourne whence no traveller returns. Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul; your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell." The Poet's cousin instantly sent the ten pounds, though at that time far from rich: he afterwards sent five pounds more, and generously offered to take Robert and educate and bring him up like one of his own sons: Mrs. Dunlop also wrote; and, alarmed with the despondency of the Poet's last letter, assured him of her undiminished esteem, and that his family might depend on her friendship: it is needless so say how amply this was fulfilled.

These are supposed, by some, to be the last words which he wrote: there are yet later, and of higher import and meaning. As the day of life darkened down, Burns began to prepare for the change: he remembered that he had written many matters, both in verse and prose, of a nature licentious as well as witty. He sought to reclaim them, and in some instances succeeded; he had, when his increasing difficulties were rumoured about, received an offer for them from a bookseller; but he spurned at fifty pounds in comparison with his fair fame, and refused to sell or sanction them. That such things were scattered abroad troubled him greatly; he reflected that the mean and the malignant might rake them together; and, quoting them against him, triumph over his fame, and trample on his dust. Perhaps he felt some consolation in believing that his other works transcended these so far in talent and in number that the grosser would be weighed down, cast aside, and forgotten. What troubled him most was the imputations of disloyalty to his country which had been thrown upon his character: he trembled lest he should be represented as one who desired to purchase republican license at the price of foreign invasion. He had defended his character and motives in a letter, uncommonly manly and eloquent, to Erskine of Mar; but he had requested it to be burnt, and was not aware that it was fortunately preserved. He still retained the letter in his memory, and it was the last act of his pen to write it out fair, and with comments, into his memorandum-book. Burns thus gave his deliberate—I might say dying—sanction to that important letter; it makes statements which cover the Board of Excise and the British government of that day with eternal shame, and contains sentiments honourable to

* [It appears from the inventory of Burns's effects that

it was a Banker's draft which was sent by Mr. Thomson.]

the head and heart of the Poet—such as should live in the bosom of every Briton.

"You have been misinformed," says Burns, "as to my final dismissal from the Excise—I am still in the service. Indeed, but for the exertions of Mr. Graham of Fintray, who has ever been my warm and generous friend, I had, without so much as a hearing, or the slightest previous intimation, been turned adrift, with my helpless family, to all the horrors of want. In my defence to their accusations, I said that, whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain I abjured the idea; that a constitution, which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory;—that, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally or as an author, in the present business of reform; but that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious constitution, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended. My last remark gave great offence, and Mr. Corbet was instructed to inquire on the spot, and to document me—"That my business was to act, *not to think*." A nobleman connected with the Pitt administration, to whom I repeated these last words, smiled bitterly and said—"They are as absurd as they are cruel."

Having removed the veil of mystery which hung too long over this transaction, and established himself as a lover of his country with all who know what patriotism is, Burns proceeds to discuss his hopes of fame, and his character as a man and a poet.—"The partiality of my countrymen," he observes, "has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the Poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments which, I trust, will be found in the man. My honest fame is my dearest concern, and a thousand times I have trembled at the idea of those degrading epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity exulting in his hireling paragraphs—"Burns, notwithstanding the fanfaronade of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held forth to public view, and to public estimation, as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, he dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the vilest of mankind."—In your hands, sir, permit me to lodge my disavowal

and defiance of these slanderous falsehoods. Burns was a poor man by birth, and an exciseman by necessity; but—I will say it—the sterling of his honest worth no poverty could debase, and his independent British mind oppression might bend, but could not subdue." These sentiments need no comment: in them we hear the voice of Burns speaking from the grave, desiring justice rather than mercy.

Sea-bathing relieved for awhile the pains in the Poet's limbs; but his appetite failed; he was oppressed with melancholy; he looked ruefully forward, and saw misery and ruin ready to swallow his helpless household up. He grew feverish on the 14th of July; felt himself sinking, and longed to be at home. He returned on the 18th in a small spring cart; the ascent to his house was steep, and the cart stopped at the foot of the Mill-hole-brae; when he alighted he shook much, and stood with difficulty; he seemed unable to stand upright. He stooped, as if in pain, and walked tottering towards his own door; his looks were hollow and ghastly, and those who saw him then never expected to see him in life again.

It was soon spread through Dumfries that Burns had returned from The Brow much worse than when he went away, and it was added that he was dying. The anxiety of the people, high and low, was very great. I was present and saw it. Wherever two or three were together their talk was of Burns, and of him alone. They spoke of his history, of his person, and of his works—of his witty sayings and sarcastic replies, and of his too early fate, with much enthusiasm, and sometimes with deep feeling. All that he had done, and all that they had hoped he would accomplish, were talked of: half-a-dozen of them stopped Dr. Maxwell in the street, and said, "How is Burns, Sir?" He shook his head, saying, "he cannot be worse," and passed on to be subjected to similar inquiries farther up the way. I heard one of a group inquire, with much simplicity, "Who do you think will be our poet now?"

Though Burns now knew he was dying, his good humour was unruffled, and his wit never forsook him. When he looked up and saw Dr. Maxwell at his bed-side,—"*Alas!*" he said, "what has brought you here? I am but a poor crow, and not worth plucking." He pointed to his pistols, those already mentioned, the gift of their maker, Blair of Birmingham, and desired that Maxwell would accept of them, saying they could not be in worthier keeping, and he should never more have need of them. This relieved his proud heart from a sense of obligation. Soon afterwards he saw Gibson, one of his brother-volunteers, by the bed-side, with tears in his eyes. He smiled and said,—"*John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me!*"

His household presented a melancholy spec

tacle: the Poet dying; his wife in hourly expectation of being confined: four helpless children wandering from room to room, gazing on their miserable parents, and but too little of food or cordial kind to pacify the whole or soothe the sick. To Jessie Lewars, all who are charmed with the Poet's works are much indebted: she acted with the prudence of a sister and the tenderness of a daughter, and kept desolation away, though she could not keep disease.—“A tremor,” says Maxwell, “pervaded his frame; his tongue, though often refreshed, became parched; and his mind, when not roused by conversation, sunk into delirium. On the second and third day after his return from The Brow, the fever increased and his strength diminished. On the fourth day, when his attendant, James Maclure, held a cordial to his lips, he swallowed it eagerly—rose almost wholly up—spread out his hands—sprang forward nearly the whole length of the bed—fell on his face and expired.* He was thirty-seven years and seven months old, and of a form and strength which promised long life; but the great and inspired are often cut down in youth, while

“Villains ripen gray with time.”

I went to see him laid out for the grave; several elder people were with me. He lay in a plain unadorned coffin, with a linen sheet drawn over his face; and on the bed around the body, herbs and flowers were thickly strewn, according to the usage of the country. He was wasted somewhat by long illness; but death had not increased the swarthy hue of his face—which was uncommonly dark and deeply marked—his broad and open brow was pale and serene, and around it his sable hair lay in masses, slightly touched with grey. The room where he lay was plain and neat, and the simplicity of the Poet's humble dwelling pressed the presence of death more closely on the heart than if his bier had been embellished by vanity and covered with the blazonry of high ancestry and rank. We stood and gazed on him in silence for the space of several minutes—we went, and others succeeded us—not a whisper was heard.

On the evening of the 25th of July, the remains of the Poet were removed from his house to the Town Hall, where they lay in state until the next morning.

His interment took place on the 26th of July; nor should it be forgotten, in relating the Poet's melancholy story, that, while his body was borne along the street, his widow was taken in labour and delivered of a son, who survived his birth but a short while. The

leading men of the town and neighbourhood appeared as mourners; the streets were lined by the Angus-shire Fencibles, and the Cinque Ports Cavalry, and his body was borne by the Volunteers, to the old kirk-yard, with military honours. The multitude who followed amounted to many thousands. It was an impressive and a mournful sight; all was orderly and decorous. The measured steps, the military array, the colours displayed, and the muffled drum—I thought then, and think now—had no connexion with a Pastoral Bard. I mingled with the mourners. On reaching the grave into which the Poet's body was about to descend, there was a pause among them, as if loth to part with his remains; and when the first shovel-full of earth sounded on the coffin-lid, I looked up, and saw tears on many cheeks where tears were not usual. The Volunteers justified the surmise of Burns by three ragged and straggling volleys: the earth was heaped up, the green sod laid over him, and the vast multitude melted silently away. The day was a fine one, the sun was almost without a cloud, and not a drop of rain fell from dawn to twilight. I notice this, not from any concurrence in the common superstition that ‘happy is the corpse which the rain pours on,’ but to confute the pious fraud of a religious writer, who intimated that Heaven expressed its wrath at the interment of a profane poet, in thunder, in lightning, and in rain.

The body of Burns was not, however, to remain long in its place. To suit the plan of a rather showy mausoleum, his remains were removed into a more commodious spot of the same kirk-yard, on the 5th of June, 1815. The coffin was partly dissolved away; but the dark curling locks of the Poet were as glossy, and seemed as fresh, as on the day of his death. In the interior of the structure stands a marble monument, embodying, with little skill or grace, that well-known passage in the dedication to the gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt:—“The poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough—and threw her inspiring mantle over me.” The Poet's dust has been a second time disturbed. At the funeral of his widow, April 1834, two or three believers in the romantic science of craniology disinterred his skull, applied their compasses, and satisfied themselves that Burns had capacity equal to the composition of “Tam-o-Shanter,” “The Cotter's Saturday Night,” and “To Mary in Heaven.” “O for an hour of Burns for these men's sake!” exclaims a kindred spirit, “were there a witch of Endor in Scotland, it would be an act of comparative piety in her to bring up his spirit:

* [Mr. Chambers says the author must have been misinformed when he represented the Poet as rising at the last moment, and springing to the bottom of the bed. “The poor Bard was far indeed from being in a condition to make any violent movement. Though he had been muttering in

delirium for some time before, he died in a state of perfect calmness—the calmness of exhaustion. His eldest son, who was in the room at the moment, reports the mournful event as having thus taken place; and we cannot well see how he could be mistaken.”—]

to stigmatize them in verses that would burn for ever would be a gratification for which he might think it worth while to be thus brought again upon earth." All mankind have heard of the malediction which Shakspeare utters from his monument, and of the dread which came upon the boors of Stratford-on-Avon, as they presumed to gaze on his dust: no such fears, however, fell upon the craniologists of Dumfries: the clock struck one as they touched the dread relic: they tried their hats upon the head, and found them all too little; and, having made a mould, they deposited the skull in a leaden box, "carefully lined with the softest materials," and returned it once more to the hallowed ground! Here, as to a shrine, flock annually vast numbers of pilgrims; many, very many, are from America; not a few from France and Germany; and the list-book contains the names of the most eminent men of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Though Burns died poor, the generous activity of his friends and admirers, among whom Syme, Maxwell, and Macmurdo, were active and liberal, placed his young widow and helpless children beyond the reach of want. Currie, the chief benefactor of all, wrote the Poet's life, and edited his works: Lord Sidmouth placed his eldest son Robert in the Stamp-office: Lord Panmure sent fifty pounds annually to his widow, till her sons were able to interpose and take the pious duty on themselves; and William Nicol and James Glencairn went out to India on cadetships, one of which was bestowed by the generous Sir James Shaw. Francis Wallace died young, so did Maxwell: the street in which the Poet died was named Burns-street: the walks in which he mused were remembered and respected, and his widow lived and died in the house which he had occupied. She had acted, throughout her long life, with equal prudence and propriety; lived in comfort, and, aided by the counsel and advice of her younger brother, a London merchant of great respectability, preserved her affairs in excellent order, and was enabled to save a small sum out of her annual income.

[Soon after the death of Burns, the following article appeared in the Dumfries Journal. It is from the elegant pen of a lady already alluded to in the course of these memoirs,* whose exertions for the family of our Bard, in the circles of literature and fashion in which she moves, have done her so much honour.

"The attention of the public seems to be much occupied at present with the loss it has recently sustained in the death of the Caledonian Poet, Robert Burns—a loss calculated to be severely felt throughout the literary world, as well as lamented in the narrower sphere of private friendship. It was not, therefore,

probable that such an event should be long unattended with the accustomed profusion of posthumous anecdotes and memoirs which are usually circulated immediately after the death of every rare and celebrated personage. I had, however, conceived no intention of appropriating to myself the privilege of criticising Burns's writings and character, or of anticipating on the province of a biographer.

"Conscious, indeed, of my own inability to do justice to such a subject, I should have continued wholly silent, had misrepresentation and calumny been less industrious; but a regard to truth, no less than affection for the memory of a friend, must now justify my offering to the public a few at least of those observations which an intimate acquaintance with Burns, and the frequent opportunities I have had of observing equally his happy qualities and his failings for several years past, have enabled me to communicate.

"It will actually be an injustice done to Burns's character, not only by future generations and foreign countries, but even by his native Scotland, and perhaps a number of his contemporaries, that he is generally talked of, and considered, with reference to his poetical talents *only*: for the fact is, even allowing his great and original genius its due tribute of admiration, that poetry (I appeal to all who have had the advantage of being personally acquainted with him) was actually not his *forte*. Many others, perhaps, may have ascended to prouder heights in the region of Parnassus, but none certainly ever outshone Burns in the charms, the sorcery, I would almost call it, of fascinating conversation, the spontaneous eloquence of social argument, or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee; nor was any man, I believe, ever gifted with a larger portion of the '*vivida vis animis*.' His personal endowments were perfectly correspondent to the qualifications of his mind—his form was manly—his action, energy itself—devoid in a great measure perhaps of those graces, of that polish, acquired only in the refinement of societies where in early life he could have no opportunities of mixing; but where such was the irresistible power of attraction that encircled him, though his appearance and manners were always peculiar, he never failed to delight and to excel. His figure seemed to bear testimony to his earlier destination and employments. It seemed rather moulded by nature for the rough exercises of agriculture than the gentler cultivation of the Belles Lettres. His features were stamped with the hardy character of independence, and the firmness of conscious, though not arrogant, pre-eminence; the animated expressions of countenance were almost peculiar to himself; the rapid lightnings of his eye were always the harbingers of some flash of genius, whether they darted the fiery glances of insulted and indignant superiority, or beamed with the im-

[* Mrs. Riddel of Woodlee-Park.]

passioned sentiment of fervent and impetuous affections. His voice alone improved upon the magic of his eye: sonorous, replete with the finest modulations, it alternately captivated the ear with the melody of poetic numbers, the perspicuity of nervous reasoning, or the ardent sallies of enthusiastic patriotism. The keenness of satire was, I am almost at a loss whether to say his *forte* or his *foible*; for though nature had endowed him with a portion of the most pointed excellence in that dangerous talent, he suffered it too often to be the vehicle of personal and sometimes unfounded animosities. It was not always that sportiveness of humour, that 'unwary pleasantry,' which Sterne has depicted with touches so conciliatory, but the darts of ridicule were frequently directed as the caprice of the instant suggested, or as the altercations of parties and of persons happened to kindle the restlessness of his spirit into interest or aversion. This, however, was not invariably the case: his wit (which was no unusual matter indeed) had always the start of his judgment, and would lead him to the indulgence of raillery uniformly acute, but often unaccompanied with the least desire to wound. The suppression of an arch and full-pointed *bon-mot*, from a dread of offending its object, the sage of Zurich very properly classes as a virtue *only to be sought for in the calendar of saints*; if so, Burns must not be too severely dealt with for being rather deficient in it. He paid for his mischievous wit as dearly as any one could do. 'Twas no extravagant arithmetic,' to say of him, as was said of Yorick, that 'for every ten jokes he got a hundred enemies;' but much allowance will be made by a candid mind for the splenetic warmth of a spirit whom 'distress had spited with the world,' and which, unbounded in its intellectual sallies and pursuits, continually experienced the curbs imposed by the waywardness of his fortune. The vivacity of his wishes and temper was indeed checked by almost habitual disappointments, which sat heavy on a heart that acknowledged the ruling passion of independence, without having ever been placed beyond the grasp of penury. His soul was never languid or inactive, and his genius was extinguished only with the last spark of retreating life. His passions rendered him, according as they disclosed themselves in affection or antipathy, an object of enthusiastic attachment, or of decided enmity; for he possessed none of that negative insipidity of character whose love might be regarded with indifference, or whose resentment could be considered with contempt. In this, it should seem, the temper of his associates took the tincture from his own; for he acknowledged in the universe but two classes of objects, those of adoration the most fervent, or of aversion the most uncontrollable; and it has been frequently a reproach to him that, unsusceptible of indifference, often hating where he ought

only to have despised, he alternately opened his heart, and poured forth the treasures of his understanding to such as were incapable of appreciating the homage; and elevated to the privileges of an adversary some who were unqualified in all respects for the honour of a contest so distinguished.

"It is said that the celebrated Dr. Johnson professed to 'love a good hater'—a temperament that would have singularly adapted him to cherish a prepossession in favour of our Bard, who perhaps fell but little short even of the surly doctor in this qualification, as long as the disposition to ill-will continued; but the warmth of his passions was fortunately corrected by their versatility. He was seldom, indeed never, implacable in his resentments; and sometimes, it has been alleged, not inviolably faithful in his engagements of friendship. Much, indeed, has been said about his inconstancy and caprice; but I am inclined to believe that they originated less in a levity of sentiment than from an extreme impetuosity of feeling, which rendered him prompt to take umbrage; and his sensations of pique, where he fancied he had discovered the traces of neglect, scorn, or unkindness, took their measure of asperity from the over-flowings of the opposite sentiment which preceded them, and which seldom failed to regain its ascendancy in his bosom on the return of calmer reflection. He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and his *avowal* was a *reparation*. His native *fierté* never forsaking him for a moment, the value of a frank acknowledgment was enhanced tenfold towards a generous mind, from its never being attended with servility. His mind, organized only for the stronger and more acute operations of the passions, was impracticable to the efforts of superciliousness that would have depressed it into humility, and equally superior to the encroachments of venal suggestions that might have led him into the mazes of hypocrisy.

"It has been observed that he was far from averse to the incense of flattery, and could receive it tempered with less delicacy than might have been expected, as he seldom transgressed extravagantly in that way himself: where he paid a compliment, it might indeed claim the power of intoxication, as approbation from him was always an honest tribute from the warmth and sincerity of his heart. It has been sometimes represented by those who, it should seem, had a view to depreciate, though they could not hope wholly to obscure, that native brilliancy which the powers of this extraordinary man had invariably bestowed on every thing that came from his lips or pen, that the history of the Ayr-shire plough-boy was an ingenious fiction, fabricated for the purposes of obtaining the interests of the great, and enhancing the merits of what in reality required no foil. "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "Tam o'

Shanter," and "The Mountain Daisy," besides a number of later productions, where the maturity of his genius will be readily traced, and which will be given to the public as soon as his friends have collected and arranged them, speak sufficiently for themselves; and had they fallen from a hand more dignified in the ranks of society than that of a peasant, they had perhaps bestowed as unusual a grace there as even in the humbler shade of rustic inspiration from whence they really sprang.

"To the obscure scene of Burns's education, and to the laborious, though honourable station of rural industry, in which his parentage enrolled him, almost every inhabitant of the south of Scotland can give testimony. His only surviving brother, Gilbert Burns, now guides the ploughshare of his forefathers in Ayrshire, at a farm near Mauchline; and our Poet's eldest son, a lad of nine years of age, whose early dispositions already prove him to be in some measure the inheritor of his father's talents as well as indigence, has been destined by his family to the humble employments of the loom.

"That Burns had received no classical education, and was acquainted with the Greek and Roman authors only through the medium of translations, is a fact of which all who were in the habit of conversing with him might readily be convinced. I have, indeed, seldom observed him to be at a loss in conversation, unless where the dead languages and their writers have been the subjects of discussion. When I have pressed him to tell me why he never applied himself to acquire the Latin, in particular, a language which his happy memory would have so soon enabled him to be master of, he used only to reply, with a smile, that he had already learnt all the Latin he desired to know, and that was *omnia vincit amor*—a sentence that, from his writings and most favourite pursuits, it should undoubtedly seem he was most thoroughly versed in; but I really believe his classic erudition extended little, if any, farther.

"The penchant Burns had uniformly acknowledged for the festive pleasures of the table, and towards the fairer and softer objects of nature's creation, has been the rallying point whence the attacks of his censors have been uniformly directed; and to these, it must be confessed, he showed himself no stoic. His poetical pieces blend, with alternate happiness of description, the frolic spirit of the flowing bowl, or melt the heart to the tender and impassioned sentiments in which beauty always taught him to pour forth his own. But who would wish to reprove the feelings he has consecrated with such lively touches of nature? And where is the rugged moralist who will persuade us so far to 'chill the genial current of the soul' as to regret that Ovid ever celebrated his Corinna, or that Anacreon sang beneath his vine?

"I will not, however, undertake to be the

apologist of the irregularities even of a man of genius, though I believe it is as certain that genius never was free from irregularities as that their absolution may, in great measure, be justly claimed, since it is perfectly evident that the world had continued very stationary in its intellectual acquirements had it never given birth to any but men of plain sense. Evenness of conduct, and a due regard to the decorum of the world, have been so rarely seen to move hand in hand with genius that some have gone so far as to say, though there I cannot wholly acquiesce, that they are even incompatible; besides, the frailties that cast their shade over the splendour of superior merit are more conspicuously glaring than where they are the attendants of mere mediocrity. It is only on the gem we are disturbed to see the dust; the pebble may be soiled, and we never regard it. The eccentric intuitions of genius too often yield the soul to the wild effervescence of desires, always unbounded, and sometimes equally dangerous to the repose of others as fatal to its own. No wonder, then, if virtue herself be sometimes lost in the blaze of kindling animation, or that the calm monitions of reason are not invariably found sufficient to fetter an imagination which scorns the narrow limits and restrictions that would chain it to the level of ordinary minds. The child of nature, the child of sensibility, unschooled in the rigid precepts of philosophy, too often unable to control the passions which proved a source of frequent errors and misfortunes to him, Burns made his own artless apology, in language more impressive than all the argumentary vindications in the world could do, in one of his own poems, where he delineates the gradual expansion of his mind to the lessons of the 'tutelary muse,' who concludes an address to her pupil, almost unique for simplicity and beautiful poetry, with these lines:—

'I saw thy pulse's madd'ning play
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way;
Misd led by Fancy's meteor ray,
By Passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven.*

"I have already transgressed beyond the bounds I had proposed to myself on first committing this sketch to paper, which comprehends what, at least, I have been led to deem the leading features of Burns's mind and character. A literary critique I do not aim at—mine is wholly fulfilled if in these pages I have been able to delineate any of those strong traits that distinguished him, of those talents which raised him from the plough, where he passed the bleak morning of his life, weaving his rude wreaths of poesy with the wild field-flowers that sprang around his cottage, to that enviable eminence of literary fame, where Scotland will long cherish his memory with delight and gratitude;

* See the Vision—Duan 2d.

and proudly remember that beneath her cold sky a genius was ripened, without care or culture, that would have done honour to climes more favourable to those luxuriations—that warmth of colouring and fancy in which he so eminently excelled.

“From several paragraphs I have noticed in the public prints, ever since the idea of sending this sketch to some one of them was formed, I find private animosities have not yet subsided, and that envy has not yet exhausted all her shafts. I still trust, however, that honest fame will be permanently affixed to Burns’s character, which I think it will be found he *has* merited, by the candid and impartial among his countrymen. And where a recollection of the imprudences that sullied his brighter qualifications interposes, let the imperfection of all human excellence be remembered at the same time, leaving those inconsistencies, which alternately exalted his nature into the seraph and sank it again into the man, to the tribunal which *alone* can investigate the labyrinths of the human heart—

‘Where they alike in trembling hope repose,

The bosom of his father and his God.’—GRAY’S *Elegy*.
Annandale, August 7, 1796.”]

Thus lived and died ROBERT BURNS, the chief of Scottish Poets. He seems to have been created to shew how little classic lore is required for the happiest flights of the muse—how dangerous to domestic peace burning passions and touchy sensibilities are—and how divinely a man may be inspired, without gaining bread or acquiring importance in the land his genius adorns.

Burns in his youth was tall and sinewy, with coarse swarthy features, and a ready word of wit or of kindness for all. The man differed little from the lad; his form was vigorous, his limbs shapely, his knees firmly knit, his arms muscular and round, his hands large, his fingers long, and he stood five feet ten inches high. All his movements were unconstrained and free:—he had a slight stoop of the neck; and a lock or so of his dark waving hair was tied carelessly behind with two casts of narrow black ribbon. His looks beamed with genius and intelligence; his forehead was broad and clear, shaded by raven locks inclined to curl; his cheeks were furrowed more with anxiety than time; his nose was short rather than long; his mouth, firm and manly; his teeth, white and regular; and there was a dimple, a small one, on his chin. His eyes were large, dark, and lustrous: I have heard them likened to coach-lamps approaching in a dark night, because they were first seen of any part of the Poet.—“I never saw,” said Scott, “such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time.” In his ordinary moods, Burns looked a man of a hundred; but when animated in company, he was a man of a million; his

swarthy features glowed; his eyes kindled up till they all but lightened; his slight stoop vanished; and his voice—deep, manly, and musical—added its sorcery of pathos or of wit, till the dullest owned the enchantments of genius.

His personal strength was united to great activity: he could move a twenty-stone sack of meal without much apparent effort, and load a cart with bags of corn in the time, one of his neighbours said, that other men were talking about it. A mason was hewing him a stone for a cheese-press, and Burns took pleasure, as a side was squared, to turn over the huge mass unaided. A large pebble is still pointed out at Ellisland, as his putting-stone; and though no living man at Nithsdale perhaps can poise it in the air, the tradition proves the popular belief in his great strength. He delighted in feats of rural activity and skill; he loved to draw the straightest furrow on his fields, to sow the largest quantity of seed-corn of any farmer in the dale in a day, mow the most rye-grass and clover in ten hours of exertion, and stook to the greatest number of reapers. In this he sometimes met with his match. After a hard strife on the harvest field, with a fellow-husbandman, in which the Poet was equalled:—“Robert,” said his rival, “I’m no sae far behind this time, I’m thinking?”—“John,” said he in a whisper, “you’re behind in something yet: I made a sang while I was stoeking!” I have heard my father say that Burns had the handsomest cast of the hand in sowing corn he ever saw on a furrowed field.

Burns desired as much to excel in conversation as he did in these fits and starts of husbandry; but he was more disposed to contend for victory than to seek for knowledge. The debating club of Tarbolton was ever strong within him: a fierce lampoon, or a rough epigram, was often the reward of those who ventured to contradict him. His conversation partook of the nature of controversy, and he urged his opinions with a vehemence amounting to fierceness. All this was natural enough when he was involved in argument with the boors around him; but he was disposed, when pressed in debate, to be equally discourteous and unsparing to the polite and the titled.

In the company of men of talent he was another man; he was then among his peers, and listened with attention, and spoke with a modest eloquence which surprised many. “I think Burns,” said Robertson, the historian, to Professor Christison, “was one of the most extraordinary men I ever met with; his poetry surprised me very much, his prose surprised me still more, and his conversation surprised me more than both his poetry and prose.” “His address,” says Robert Riddel, “was pleasing; he was neither forward nor embarrassed in manner; his spirits were generally high, and his conversation animated. His language was

fluent, frequently fine; his enunciation always rapid: his ideas clear and vigorous, and he had the rare power of modulating his peculiarly fine voice, so as to harmonise with whatever subject he touched upon. I have heard him talk with astonishing rapidity, nor miss the articulation of a single syllable; elevate and depress his voice as the topic seemed to require; and sometimes, when the subject was pathetic, he would prolong the words in the most impressive and affecting manner, indicative of the deep sensibility which inspired him. He often lamented to me that fortune had not placed him at the bar or in the senate; he had great ambition, and the feeling that he could not gratify it preyed upon him severely."

In the morning of life, Burns met lords with awe and embarrassment; in the afternoon of existence, he encountered them with suspicion and scorn. Those who named a lord, or alluded to a person of rank in his company, were instantly crushed in an epigram, or offended by some sarcastic sally. The conduct of the Scottish aristocracy had sunk to his heart, and the neglect of the Pitt administration was seldom away from his fancy. The more he saw of the world, and the more he reflected, these unwelcome thoughts pressed the more upon him. He could not but know that the high-born and the well-connected prospered: that thousands less worthy than himself were fattening on posts and pensions, and elbowing the sons of genius out of what he considered their patrimony; he had also been made to feel his dependence, in that insulting mandate from the Board of Excise, that his duty was "to act, and not to think." It is true that his dislike might have been expressed with more courtesy, and his wit might have had less ferocity, with equal keenness of point. Yet, when he proposed to drink the health of Washington instead of Pitt, it was less a matter of ill-breeding, or republican feeling, than a burst of anger: he considered the Premier as one of his oppressors; and perhaps the want of courtesy belonged to him who invited the Poet to dinner, and greeted him with this unwelcome toast.

In the company of ladies, Burns was quite another being; for them he calmed down his impetuous temper, and allowed all that was winning in his nature to shine out. He was fierce as Moloch among men: among women he was a Belial, soft, insinuating, and eloquent: his eyes, which before sparkled like those of the serpent, became meek like those of the dove: the love of contradiction died within him, and he courted his way to their hearts and their understandings at the same time. In this his letters differ widely from his conversation: the presence of beauty inspired him; when it was no longer before him, he seems to hunt for thoughts and hesitate for words, and amid much natural

emotion, is affected and cumbrous. Nothing more untrue was ever uttered than that his female patronesses shrunk from the vehement familiarity of his admiration: there is no proof to be found of this: Margaret Chalmers, indeed, scrupled to have a song published in her praise; and Miss Alexander chose to resent by her silence the song of the "Lass of Ballochmyle;" but there is no instance of ladies shrinking from the audacity of his admiration. His most constant correspondents were ladies of birth and talent; the ladies of the north, much to their honour, sympathised with their Poet to the last; and the day after he was buried, some of the proudest dames of Dumfries-shire shed tears, as they scattered flowers over his grave. In truth, he did not express the rapture of an enamoured peasant, as Jeffrey assures us he did, but the admiration of a man: he preferred the good-breeding of nature to the iced civilities of polished life: he did not, indeed, think that woman was to be worshipped according to the fantastic rules of chivalry; but when she spoke, he listened; when she sang, he seemed to become intoxicated with the sound; and when she played on an instrument, he neither heard nor saw aught else save herself and her music.

To the opinions of the world Burns paid too little deference: whatever he felt he said, and what he said often glanced sharply on religion and on politics. He attacked the fiery zeal of sundry churchmen—it was called an attack on religion: he attacked the pride and presumption of the titled—it was called envy and arrogance: he wished for more wealth among the poor, and more humility among the rich—and was branded as a disturber of the public peace; and he desired to see the principles of the revolution of 1688 carried into effect with less corruption in the high places—and was called a jacobin, and ordered to be silent.

What he was with the world at large, so was he with man in particular: he had no medium in his hatred or his love; he never spared the dull, as if they were not to be endured because he was himself bright; wealth he was inclined to visit as a fault on the possessor. When in the company of the demure and the pious, he loved to start doubts in religion, which he knew nothing short of inspiration could solve; and to speak of Calvinism with such latitude of language as shocked or vexed all listeners, and caused him to be regarded by some as a free-thinker or a deist. In his own household he was another man: he was an affectionate husband and a dutiful father; he loved to teach his boys their duty to God and to their neighbour. To Mrs. Haugh—a most respectable woman—in whose house he lived in the Bank-Vennel, and who was much with him during his long illness—he lamented that he had sometimes doubted the truths of Scripture: he found them to be his consolation at last.

I have no wish to shut my eyes on the follies of the Poet: they have darkened other narratives than mine. The memoir of Heron, the criticism of Jeffrey, and the communications of Syme have gone widely abroad. With the first, Burns is a coarse libertine; with the second a careless drunkard, who starved his wife and children; while the third describes him as rough and fierce, and inclined to stab the friend who hazarded good advice. Of the feelings of Heron, it is sufficient to say that he penned his depreciating memoir to meet the subscription for the Poet's widow and children; of the opinion of Jeffrey, I may safely assert that he has judged amiss; and with regard to the account of Syme, I can only imagine that it originated in some mistake on the part of him of Ryedale:—to suppose Burns serious, contradicts all the rest of his life. Of Heron, the Poet must have thought when he said,—“I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney scribbler with the heavy malice of savage stupidity exulting in his hiring paragraphs.”

Burns was no tippler; he loved the excitement of company, and to see the bottle circulate; to others, as well as to him,

“Every new cork was a new spring of joy.”

Nor did he know always when to retire from these social excesses; good fellowship was as a spell upon him. His own heart, always too open, was then laid bare. He watched the characters of men; he gladdened the clever by the sallies of his fancy, stimulated the dull by his wit, and imagined that he was strengthening the ties of friendship, and that

“The bands grew the tighter the more they were wet.”

No doubt, later in life he desired to escape from uneasy reflection—from thinking of ruined hopes and humbled ambition, and, seeking consolation in company, he took an angel of darkness to his heart rather than one of light. I am assured by Mrs. Haugh, who knew him well to the last, that Burns drank from circumstances rather than inclination. An angel from heaven, she said, could scarcely have escaped corruption in his situation: he was constantly invited, nay sometimes almost literally dragged into company. Her husband now and then, as he went out by day-light in the morning to his work, met Burns coming home. The Poet never passed him without a word or two, expressing his sorrow for the life he was leading—such as, “O, Mr. Haugh, you are a happy man; you have arisen from a refreshing sleep, and left a kind wife and children, while I am returning a poor

self-condemned wretch to mind.” At whatever hour he came home, or in whatever condition he returned, he always spoke kindly to his wife; reproachful words were never heard between them.* He was a steadfast friend and a good neighbour, ready with his hands, and willing to oblige: while he lived at Ellisland, few passed his door without being cheered by his wit or treated at his table.

Of women and their fascinations he loved to talk freely and wildly; the witchery of his conversation, and the magic of his songs, were too powerful for the resolution of some; but his errors in this way have been seriously exaggerated. Those who were unacquainted with the freedoms of the muse beheld him making love in every song he wrote; and young spinsters—

“Coost their heads fu’ high,”

when they saw their charms reflected in the bright verses of the Bard, and suspected their own fortune. Some were less timid: one intrepid young lady said she desired the Poet's acquaintance of all things, and intimated the time and place where he might meet her. He took a way which did not always succeed, of scaring such importunents.—“It is scarcely modest in a fine young woman,” was the reply, “to seek the acquaintance of one whose character is considered so bad.” To a lively landlady in Dumfries, whose ale firkins were to be examined, he said,—“Who will go down to the cellar with me till I gauge the browst?”—“I'll go down with you myself, Mr. Burns,” she replied. He turned round on her, and, with a peculiar glance, said,—“O, woman, strong is thy faith!” Stories of this complexion, oftener for than against him, might be multiplied:—

“Between two maids, who hath the merriest eye
He had, indeed, no shallow spirit of judgment.”

The political heresies of the Poet are more easily dealt with. He knew that he was created with high powers of mind; he was conscious not only of his superiority to the peasants around, but to men of high title and of long descent, and felt himself defrauded of the station nature intended him to fill in society:—this is visible in almost all he writes. He can justify the ways of God to man, but he cannot justify the ways of man to God; he feels that heaven creates nothing hereditary—neither beauty, nor taste, nor talent; and he is grieved to see men insult the great laws of nature, and form institutions contradicting God's divine system. This is the sentiment which inspires that noble lyric “A man's a man for a' that;” and it was this feeling which made him sad and despond-

*“He was always anxious that his wife should have a neat and genteel appearance. In consequence, as she alleged, of the duties of nursing and attending to her infants, she could not help being sometimes a little slovenly. Burns disliked this, and not only remonstrated against it in a gentle way, but did the utmost that in him lay to counteract it, by buying for her the best clothes he could afford. Any little

novelty in female dress was almost sure to meet with patronage from Burns—all with the aim of keeping up a spirit for neat dressing in his wife. She was, for instance, one of the first persons in Dumfries who appeared in a dress of gingham—a stuff now common to all, but, at its first introduction, rather costly, and almost exclusively used by persons of superior condition.” CHAMBERS.]

ing—which induced him to seek consolation in the shadowy images of republics, and hail with so much rapture the dawn of a liberty which promised the empire of the earth to the worth and genius which it produced. That Pitt did not feel truly, nor weigh worthily, the genius and sentiments of the “meteor of the north,” as the Poet was idly called, seems perfectly clear. When reminded of his claims by Henry Addington, he pushed the bottle to Lord Melville, and did nothing; his own days were shortened by disappointed hopes and crushed ambition. Had a situation worthy of the genius of Burns been bestowed on him, this tale had neither been so dark nor so sorrowful—he would not have perished like a caged eagle, denied the full use of its wings and the free range of its cloud-capt mountains.

Of his modes of study and habits of life much has already been said; something more can be added. He has told us how he delighted in the rushing of the storm through the leafless woods; how he rejoiced in the out-gushing of the flowers in spring, in the song of the birds and the melody of running waters. In stormy nights he has been known to rise from good company and a well-furnished table, to gaze on the tumultuous clouds, to mark the vivid lightnings, and hearken to the pealing thunder. He loved, while in his farm, to stand on the scaur, and, when Nith was in flood, look at the red torrent bursting from the Bankhead-wood against Dalswinton holm, flashing and foaming from side to side, making the ashes and alders of the banks quiver and quake. His favourite spot of study lies between Ellisland onstead and the Isle—where the uplands descend by the water side to the holm. Here the neighbouring gentry love to walk, and peasants to assemble—they hold it sacred to the memory of his musings.

When he lived in Dumfries, he had three favourite walks—on the dock-green by the river side—among the ruins of Lincluden College,—and towards the Martingdon-Ford on the north side of the Nith. This latter place was secluded, commanding a view of the distant hills and the romantic towers of Lincluden, and afforded soft green-sward banks to rest upon, and the sight and sound of the stream:—here he composed many of his finest songs. As soon as he was heard to hum to himself, his wife saw that he had something in his mind, and was quite prepared to see him snatch up his hat and set silently off for his musing ground. When by himself and in the open air, his ideas arranged themselves in their natural order, words came at will, and he seldom returned without having finished a song. In case of interruption, he set about completing it at the fire-side; he balanced himself on the hind-legs of his arm-chair, and, rocking to and fro, continued to hum the tune,

and seldom failed of success. When the verses were finished, he passed them through the ordeal of Mrs. Burns' voice; listening attentively while she sung; asked her if any of the words were difficult, and when one happened to be too rough he readily found a smoother—but he never, save at the resolute entreaty of a scientific musician, sacrificed sense to sound. The autumn was his favourite season, and the twilight his favourite hour of study.

As a farmer and an exciseman he did his duty, and he did little more. He was laborious by fits, and attentive by starts; he tilled the ground and protected the revenue, but he wrought without hope in the one, and without heart in the other. He endeavoured to make his farm yield the rent by butter and by cheese, as well as by corn; and as this required female hands, he confided it mostly to the management of his wife and maid-servants. But Ellisland is naturally fitter for corn than for grass; the green-sward was far from being so luxuriant as that of the milk and butter districts of Cunningham and Kyle; nor was his wife sufficiently intimate with the management of cows, and the guidance of a dairy. The plan of Burns to unite, in his own person, the poet, the exciseman, and the farmer, was poetic, and failed as much from miscalculation as mismanagement. His duties in the Excise he performed with strict punctuality; he was afraid of being reckoned negligent, and was always at his post. He kept his books in excellent order.—“Bring me Burns' books,” said Maxwell of Terraughty, a rigid and determined magistrate; “it always does me good to see them—they shew me that a warm kind-hearted man may be a diligent and honest officer.” He was not a bustling active gauger, nor did he love to put himself foremost in adventures which he knew would end in distress to many. One clear moonlight morning, on being awakened by the clang of horses at a gallop, he started up, looked out at the window, and to his wife, who asked eagerly what it was, he whispered, “It is the noise of smugglers, Jean.”—“Robert, then I fear ye'll be to follow them?” she said.—“And so I would,” he answered, “were it Will Gunnion or Edgar Wright; but it's poor Brandyburn, who has a wife and three weans, and is no doing owre weel in his farm. What can I do?” She pulled him from the window. Many anecdotes of this kind might be told.

Of his quick wit and caustic keenness of remark I have already given instances; more are in circulation both in prose and verse. It is much, however, to be regretted that his sallies, where sentiment unites with gaiety, have frequently escaped, as matters too light and elusive, from the public mind; while sayings and retorts—sharp, personal, or profane—have remained. I shall relate a few, that nothing on which his spirit is impressed may be lost. He

disliked puns, and was seldom civil to those who uttered them.—“After all, a pun is an ‘innocent thing,’” said one of his companions.—“Innocent!” said Burns, “no, Sir; it is committing ‘a deed without a name’ with the language.” He disliked to hear great people talked about more than they deserved. One who was in his company kept saying, the Earl of such a place said this, and Duke so-and-so said that.—“Be silent, Sir!” exclaimed the Poet; “you are stopping our mouths by a royal proclamation.” He loved praise—and loved it not the less when it came from the lips of an accomplished lady.—“Madam,” said he to Mrs. M’Murdo, “your praise has ballooned me up Parnassus.”—“My merit is not all my own,” he said to Robert Aiken of Ayr, “for you have read me into reputation.” He called once on a certain Lord, in Edinburgh, and was shewn into the library. To amuse himself till his Lordship was at leisure, he took down a volume of Shakspeare, splendidly bound, and on opening it, discovered, from the gilding, that it had never been read; also, that the worms were eating it through and through. Some dozen years afterwards, another visitor took down the same volume, and found the following lines pencilled by Burns on the first page:—

“Through and through the inspired leaves,
Ye maggots, make your windings;
But, oh! respect his lordship’s taste,
And spare his golden bindings.”

[“Even to the ladies,” says Lockhart, “when he suspected them of wishing to make a show of him, he could not help administering a little of his village discipline. A certain stately Peeress sent to invite him, while in Edinburgh, to her assembly, without, as he fancied, having sufficiently cultivated his acquaintance beforehand. His answer was:—‘Mr. Burns will do himself the honour of waiting on the Countess of ——— provided her Lordship will invite also the learned Pig.’—Such an animal was then exhibiting in the Grass-market of Edinburgh.”]

Burns paid little deference to the artificial distinctions of society. On his way to Leith, one morning, he met a man in hoddin’ grey—a west-country farmer; he shook him earnestly by the hand, and stopt and conversed with him. All this was seen by a young Edinburgh blood, who took the poet roundly to task for this defect of taste.—“Why, you fantastic gomerall,” said Burns, “it was not the grey coat, the scone-bonnet, and the Sanquhar boot-hose I spoke to, but the man that was in them; and the man, Sir, for true worth, would weigh you and me, and ten more such, down any day.” His discernment was great: when Scott was quite a lad he caught the notice of the Poet, by naming the author of some verses describing a soldier lying dead on the snow. Burns regarded the future minstrel with sparkling eyes,

and said, “Young man, you have begun to consider these things early.” He paused on seeing Scott’s flushing face—shook him by the hand, saying in a deep tone, “This boy will be heard of yet.”

Speaking one day of his own poetry, Burns said, “I have much to answer for: my success in rhyme has produced a shoal of ill-spawned monsters who imagine, because they make words clink, they are poets. It requires a will-o’-wisp to pass over the quicksands and quagmires of the Scottish dialect. I am spunkie—they follow me, and sink.”

On hearing a gentleman sneering at the Solemn League and Covenant, and calling it ridiculous and fanatical, the Poet eyed him across the table, and exclaimed,

“The Solemn League and Covenant
Cost Scotland blood—cost Scotland tears—
But it sealed Freedom’s sacred cause:—
If thou’rt a slave, indulge thy sneers.”

Of the farm of Ellisland, when some one said it was good ground, Burns answered, “And so it is, save what is composed of stones. It is not land, Sir; it is the riddings of the creation!” While he was at Moffat once with Clarke the composer, the Poet called for a bumper of brandy.—“Oh, not a bumper,” said the musician.—“I prefer two small glasses.”—“Two glasses!” cried Burns, “why, you are like the lass in Kyle, who said she would rather be kissed twice bare-headed than once with her bonnet on.” At the table of Maxwell of Terraughty, when one of the guests chose to talk of the Dukes and Earls with whom he had drunk or dined, Burns silenced him with an epigram:—

“What of earls with whom you have suppt,
And of dukes that you dined with yestreen?
Lord! an insect’s an insect at most,
Though it crawl on the curls of a queen.”

On one occasion, being storm-stayed at Lamington in Clydesdale, he went to church, but was so little pleased with the preacher and the place, that he left the following poetic record on the church-window:—

“As cauld a wind as ever blew,
A cauldier kirk, and in’t but few;
As cauld a minister’s e’er spak,
Ye se a’ be het ere I come back.”

[“Sir Walter Scott,” says Lockhart, “possessed a tumbler, on which were the following verses, written by Burns on the arrival of a friend, Mr. W. Stewart, factor to a gentleman of Nithsdale. The landlady being very wroth at what she considered the disfigurement of her glass, a gentleman present appeased her by paying down a shilling, and carried off the relic:—

“You’re welcome, Willie Stewart,
You’re welcome, Willie Stewart;
There’s ne’er a flower that blooms in May
That’s half sae welcome’s thou art.

"Come, bumpers high, express your joy,
The bowl we maun renew it;
The tappit-hen gae bring her ben
To welcome Willie Stewart.

"May foes be straining, and friends be slack,
Ilk action may he rue it;
May woman on him turn her back
That wrangs thee, Willie Stewart!"

"I dired with Burns," said Mrs. Basil Montagu, "at Arbigland: he was witty; drank as others drank; and was long in coming to the tea-table. It was then the fashion for young ladies to be busy about something—I was working a flower. The Poet sat down beside me, talked of the beauty of what I was imitating, and put his hand so near the work, that I said, 'Well, take it, and do a bit yourself.'—'O, ho!' said he, 'you think my hand is unsteady with wine. I cannot work a flower, madam; but—' he pulled the thread out of the needle, and re-threaded it in a moment—'can a tipsy man do that?' He talked to me of his children, more particularly of his eldest son, and called him a promising boy—'And yet, madam,' he said, with a sarcastic glance of his eye, 'I hope he will turn out a glorious blockhead, and so make his fortune.'" Burns assumed, as well he might, the title of Poet: he was none of those who insult the taste of their admirers by depreciating the merit of their own works: on one of his books, in my possession, there is written, in his own rough, free, manly hand, "Robert Burns, Poet;" an imitation of this is added to the admirable portrait which embellishes this edition. On the collar of a favourite dog he had the same words engraven.

As a poet, Burns stands in the first rank: his conceptions are original; his thoughts new and weighty; his manner unborrowed; and even his language is his own. He owes no honour to his subjects, for they are all of an ordinary kind, such as humble life around him presented: he sought neither in high station nor in history for matter to his muse, and yet all his topics are simple, natural, and to be found without research. The Scottish bards, who preceded him, selected subjects which obtained notice from their oddity, and treated them in a way singular and *outré*. The verses of the first and fifth James, as well as those of Ramsay and Fergusson, are chiefly a succession of odd and ludicrous pictures, as true as truth itself, and no more. To their graphic force of delineation Burns added sentiment and passion, and an elegant tenderness and simplicity. He took topics familiar to all; the Daisy grew on the lands he ploughed; the Mouse built her nest on his own stubble-field; the Haggis smoked on his own board; the Scotch Drink which he sung was distilled on the banks of Doon; the Dogs that conversed so wittily and wisely were his own collies; Tam O'Shanter

was a merry husbandman of his own acquaintance; and even the "De'il himself" was familiar to all, and had often alarmed, by his eldritch croon, and the marks of his cloven foot, the pastoral people of Kyle. Burns was the first who taught the world that in lowly subjects high poetry resided. Touched by him, they were lifted at once into the regions of inspiration. His spirit ascended into an humble topic, as the sap of spring ascends a tree to endow it with beauty and fragrance.

Burns is our chief national Poet; he owes nothing of the structure of his verse or of the materials of his poetry to other lands—he is the offspring of the soil; he is as natural to Scotland as the heath is to her hills, and all his brightness, like our nocturnal Aurora, is of the north. Nor has he taken up fleeting themes: his song is not of the external manners and changeable affections of man—it is of the human heart—of the mind's hopes and fears, and of the soul's aspirations. Others give us the outward form and pressure of society—the court-costume of human nature—the laced lapelle and the epauletted shoulder. He gives us flesh and blood; all he has he holds in common with mankind, yet all is national and Scottish. We can see to whom other bards have looked up for inspiration—like fruit of the finest sort, they smack of the stock on which they were grafted. Burns read Young, Thomson, Shennstone, and Shakspeare; yet there is nothing of Young, Thomson, Shennstone, or Shakspeare about him; nor is there much of the old ballad. His light is of nature, like sunshine, and not reflected. When, in after life, he tried imitation, his "Epistle to Graham of Fintray" shewed satiric power and polish little inferior to Dryden.

He is not only one of the truest and best of Scottish Poets, but, in ease, fire, and passion, he is second to none save Shakspeare. I know of no one besides, whose verse flows forth so sparkling and spontaneous. On the lines of other bards we see marks of care and study—now and then they are happy, but they are as often elaborated out and brightened like a key by frequent handling. Burns is seldom or never so—he wrote from the impulse of nature—he wrote because his passions raged like so many demons till they got vent in rhyme. Others sit and solicit the muse, like a coy mistress, to be kind; she came to Burns "unsent for," like the "bonnie lass" in the song, and showered her favours freely. The strength was equal to the harmony; rugged westlin words were taken from the lips of the weaver and the ploughman, and adorned with melody and feeling; and familiar phrases were picked up from shepherds and mechanics, and rendered as musical as Apollo's lute.—"I can think of no verse since Shakspeare's," said Pitt to Henry Addington, "which comes so sweetly and at once from

nature. "Out of the eater came forth meat;"—but the premier praised whom he starved. Burns was not a Poet by fits and starts; the mercury of his genius stood always at the inspired point; like the fairy's drinking-cup, the fountain of his fancy was ever flowing and ever full. He had, it is true, set times and seasons when the fruits of his mind were more than usually abundant; but the songs of spring were equal to those of summer—those of summer were not surpassed by those of autumn; the quantity might be different, the flavour and richness were ever the same.

His variety is equal to his originality. His humour, his gaiety, his tenderness, and his pathos come all in a breath; they come freely, for they come of their own accord; nor are they huddled together at random, like doves and crows in a flock; the contrast is never offensive; the comic slides easily into the serious, the serious into the tender, and the tender into the pathetic. The witch's cup, out of which the wondering rustic drank seven kinds of wine at once, was typical of the muse of Burns. It is this which has made him welcome to all readers.—"No poet," says Scott, "with the exception of Shakspeare, ever possessed the power of exciting the most varied and discordant emotions with such rapid transitions."

Notwithstanding the uncommon ease and natural elegance of his musings—the sweet and impassioned tone of his verse, critics have not been wanting who perceived in his works the humility of his origin. Yet his poems, I remember well enough, were considered by many, at first, as the labours of some gentleman who assumed the rustic for the sake of indulging in satire; their knowledge was reckoned beyond the reach, and their flights above the power, of a simple ploughman. Something of this belief may be seen in Mrs. Scott of Wauchope's letter; and when it was known for a truth that the author was a ploughman, many lengthy discussions took place concerning the way in which the Poet had acquired his knowledge. Ayr race-course was pointed out as the likely scenes of his studies of high life, where he found what was graceful and elegant! When Jeffrey wrote his depreciating criticism, he forgot that Burns had studied politeness in the very school where he himself was polished. The stanza, in the lines on meeting with Lord Daer, commencing:—

"I've been at drunken writers' feasts,"

claims a scholarship which the critic might have respected. If sharp epigrams, familiar gallantry, love of independence, and a leaning to the timid be, as that critic assures us, true symptoms of vulgar birth, then Swift was a scavenger, Rochester a coalheaver, Pope a carman, and Thomson a boor. He might as well see lowness of origin in the James Stuart

who wrote "Christ's Kirk on the green," as in the Robert Burns who wrote "Tam O'Shanter." The nature which Burns infused into all he wrote deals with internal emotions: feeling is no more vulgar in a ploughman than in a prince.

In all this I see the reluctance of an accomplished scholar to admit the merits of a rustic poet who not only claimed, but took, the best station on the Caledonian Parnassus. It could be no welcome sight to philosophers, historians, and critics to see a peasant, fragrant from the furrow, elbowing his way through their polished ranks to the highest place of honour, exclaiming,—

"What's a' your jargon o' your schools?"

Some of them were no doubt astonished and incensed; nature was doing too much: they avenged themselves by advising him to leave his vulgar or romantic fancies and grow classical. His best songs they called random flights; his happiest poems the fruit of a vagrant impulse; they accounted him an accident—"a wild colt of a comet"—a sort of splendid error; and refused to look upon him as a true poet, raised by the kindly warmth of nature; for they thought nothing beautiful which was not produced or adorned by learning. "What would Burns have been if a Patrician?" said Lord Byron. "We should have had more polish—less force—just as much verse, but no immortality!"

Burns is a thorough Scotchman; his nationality, like cream on milk, floats on the surface of all his works; it mingles in his humour as well as in his tenderness; yet it is seldom or never offensive to an English ear; there is nothing narrow-souled in it. He rejoices in Scotland's ancient glory and in her present strength; he bestows his affection on her heathery mountains, as well as on her romantic vales; he glories in the worth of her husbandmen, and in the loveliness of her maidens. The bracken glens and thistly brae-sides of the North are more welcome to his sight than the sunny dales of Italy, fragrant with ungathered grapes; its men, if not quite divinities, are more than mortal; and the women are clothed in beauty, and walk in a light of their own creating; a haggis is food fit for gods; brose is a better sort of ambrosia; "wi' twopenny we fear nae evil;" and whiskey not only makes us insensible of danger, but inspires noble verse and heroic deeds. There is something at once ludicrous and dignified in all this: to excite mingled emotions was the aim of the Poet. Besides a love of country, there is an intense love of freedom about him; not the savage joy in the boundless forest and the unlicensed range, but the calm determination and temperate delight of a reflecting mind. Burns is the bard of liberty—not that which sets fancy free and

fetters the body; he resists oppression—he covets free thought and speech—he scorns slavish obedience to the mob as much as he detests tyranny in the rulers. He spoke out like a bold-inspired person; he knew his word would have weight with the world, and sung his “A man’s a man for a’ that,” as a watch-word to future generations—as a spell against slavery.

The best poems of Burns relate to rural and pastoral life, and describe the hopes, the joys, and aspirations of that portion of the people falsely called the humble, as if grandeur of soul were a thing “born in the purple,” and not the free gift and bounty of heaven. The passions and feelings of man are disguised, not changed, in polished society; flesh and blood are the same beneath hoddin’ grey as beneath three-piled velvet. This was what Burns alluded to when he said he saw little in the splendid circles of Edinburgh which was new to him. His pictures of human life and of the world are of a mental as well as a national kind. His “Two Dogs” prove that happiness is not unequally diffused: “Scotch Drink” gives us fire-side enjoyments; the “Earnest Cry and Prayer” shews the keen eye which humble people cast on their rulers; the “Address to the Deil” indulges in religious humanities, in which sympathy overcomes fear; “The Auld Mare,” and “The Address to Maillie,” enjoin, by the most simple and touching examples, kindness and mercy to dumb creatures; “The Holy Fair” desires to curb the licentiousness of those who seek amusement, instead of holiness, in religion; “Man was made to Mourn” exhorts the strong and the wealthy to be mindful of the weak and the poor; “Hallowe’en” shews us superstition in a domestic aspect; “Tam O’Shanter” adorns popular belief with humorous terror, and helps us to laugh old dreads away; “The Mouse,” in its weakness, contrasts with man in his strength, and preaches to us the instability of happiness on earth; while “The Mountain Daisy” pleads with such moral pathos the cause of the flowers of the field sent by God to adorn the earth for man’s pleasure, that our feet have pressed less ungraciously on the “wee modest crimson-tipped flower” since his song was written.

Others of his poems have a still grander reach. “The Vision” reveals the Poet’s plan of Providence, proves the worth of eloquence, bravery, honesty, and beauty, and that even the rustic bard himself is an useful and ornamental link in the great chain of being. “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” connects us with the invisible world, and shews that domestic peace, faithful love, and patriotic feelings, are of earthly things most akin to the joys of heaven; while the divine “Elegy on Matthew Henderson” unites human nature in a bond of sympathy with the stars of the sky, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, the flowery vale,

and the lonely mountain. The hastiest of his effusions has a wise aim;—this the eloquent Curran perceived when he spoke of the “sublime morality of Burns.”

Had Burns, in his poems, preached only so many moral sermons, his audience might have been a select, but it would have been a limited, one. The sublimest truths, like the surest medicines, are sometimes uneasy to swallow: for this the Poet provided an effectual remedy; he associated his moral counsel with so much tenderness and pathos, and garnished it all about with such exquisite humour, that the public, like the giant drinking the wine in Homer, gaped, and cried, “More! this is divine!” If a reader has such a limited soul as to love humour only, why Burns is his man—he has more of it than any modern poet: should he covet tenderness, he cannot read far in Burns without finding it to his mind; should he desire pathos, the Scottish Peasant has it of the purest sort; and if he wished for them mingled, let him try no other bard—for in what other poet will he find them woven more naturally into the web of song? It is by thus suiting himself to so many minds and tastes that Burns has become such a favourite with the world; if, in a strange company, we should chance to stumble in quoting him, an English voice, or an Irish one, corrects us; much of the business of life is mingled with his verse; and the lover, whether in joy or in sorrow, will find that Burns has anticipated every throb of his heart:—

“Every pulse along his veins,
And every roving fancy.”

[“Burns,” says Professor Wilson, “was in many respects born at a happy time; happy for a man of genius like him, but fatal and hopeless to the more common mind, a whole world of life lay before him, whose inmost recesses, and darkest nooks, and sunniest eminences, he had familiarly trodden from his childhood. All that world he felt could be made his own. No conqueror had overrun its fertile provinces, and it was for him to be crowned supreme over all the

‘Lyric singers of that high-soul’d land.’

The crown that he has won can never be removed from his head. Much is yet left for other poets, even among that life where his spirit delighted to work, but he has built monuments on all the high places, and they who follow can only hope to leave behind them some far humbler memorials.”]

He was the first of our northern poets who brought deep passion and high energy to the service of the muse, who added sublimity to simplicity, and found loveliness and elegance dwelling among the cottages of his native land. His simplicity is graceful as well as strong; he is never mean, never weak, never vulgar, and

but seldom coarse. All he says is above the mark of other men: his language is familiar, yet dignified; careless, yet concise; and he touches on the most ordinary—nay, perilous themes, with a skill so rare and felicitous that good fortune seems to unite with good taste, in helping him through the Slough of Despond, in which so many meaner spirits have wallowed. No one has greater power in adorning the humble, and dignifying the plain—no one else has so happily picked the sweet fresh flowers of poetry from among the thorns and brambles of the ordinary paths of existence.

"The excellence of Burns," says Thomas Carlyle—a true judge, "is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but at the same time it is plain and easily recognised—it is his sincerity—his indisputable air of truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wire-drawn refinings either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience: they are the scenes that he has lived and laboured amidst that he describes; those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul,—noble thoughts and definite resolves—and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it, too, with such melody and modulation as he can, and though but in homely rustic jingle, it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers, and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself.

"But independently of this essential gift of true poetic feeling, there is a certain rugged, sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written. A virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry,—it is redolent of natural life, and of handy, natural men. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet frequently a sweet native gracefulness. He is tender, and he is vehement; yet without constraint, or any visible effort. He melts the heart, or inflames it with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see in him the gentleness, though trembling pity, of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardour, of the hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire, as lightning, lurks in the drops of the summer cloud. He has a consonance, in his bosom, for every note of human feeling; the high and the low,—the sad and the ludicrous,—the mournful and the joyful, are welcome in their turns, to his all-conceiving spirit. And then, with what a prompt and eager force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full

image of the matter in his eye, full and clear in every lineament, and catches the real type and essence of it, among a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances,—no one of which misleads him! If there is aught of reason or truth to be discovered, there is no sophistry, no vain, surface logic detains him:—quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces into the marrow of the question, and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description? some visual object to be represented? No poet, of any age or nation, is more graphic than Burns. The characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance. Three lines from his hand, and we have a likeness,—and in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre, so clear and definite a likeness that it seems like a master limner working with a burnt stick, and yet the burin of a Retsch is not more expressive or exact.

"This clearness of sight we may call the foundation of all talent. Homer surpasses all men in this quality; but strangely enough, at no great distance below him, are Richardson and Defoe. It belongs in truth to what is called a lively mind, and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may exist along with it. In all the three cases mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity,—their descriptions are detailed, ample, and tediously exact. Homer's fire bursts through from time to time as by accident; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire, only a clear insight into the goings on of nature. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions,—of the strength, the piercing emphasis, with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble, but the readiest, proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his? who ever uttered words—words more memorable, either by their burning vehemence, their cool vigour, or their laconic pith? A single phrase depicts a whole subject—a whole scene. Our Scottish forefathers, he says, struggled forward in the battle field, *red-wat shod*, giving in this one term a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for art. In fact, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigour of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, as in his feelings and volitions; and this is at all times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment.

"He was born a poet; poetry was the celestial element of his being, and should have been the soul of his whole endeavours. Lifted into that serene ether, whither he had wings given him to mount, he would have needed no other elevation. Poverty, neglect, and all evil, save the desecration of himself and his art, were a small matter to him. The pride and passions of the world lay far beneath his feet,—and he

looked down alike on noble and on slave, on prince and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of man—with clear recognition, with brotherly affection, with sympathy, and with pity. Nay, we question whether, for his culture as a poet, poverty, and much suffering, for a season, were not altogether advantageous. Great men, in looking back over their lives, have testified to that effect. A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry—industry, which all true feeling sanctions, nay, prescribes—and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones. But to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices, and brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent from heaven? Was it his aim to enjoy life? To-morrow he must go drudge as an exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became moody and indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run a muck against them all. How could a man, as falsely placed by his own or others' fault, ever know contentment, or peaceable diligence, for an hour? What he did under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with astonishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

"Byron—a man of endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns—was born in the rank, not of a Scottish ploughman, but of an English peer. The highest worldly honours, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand—and what does all this avail him? Is he happy? is he good? is he true? Alas! he has a poet's soul, and strives towards the infinite—the eternal—and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the housetop to reach the stars. Like Burns, he is only a proud man, and night, like him, have purchased a pocket copy of Milton, to study the character of Satan; for Satan also is Byron's grand exemplar—the hero of his poetry, and the model, apparently, of his conduct. As in Burns's case, too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth. Both poet and man of the world he must not be;—vulgar ambition will not live kindly with poetic adoration—he cannot serve God and mammon. Byron, like Burns, is unhappy; nay, he is the most wretched of all men: his life is falsely arranged; the fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world,—but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which, ere long, will fill itself with snow

"Byron and Burns were put forth as missionaries to their generation, to teach it a higher doctrine, a purer truth: they had a message to deliver which left them no rest till it was accomplished. In dim throes of pain this divine behest lay smouldering within them; for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipation, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the unconverted; yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as soft flattering singers; and in pleasant fellowship will they live there. They are first adulated, then persecuted; they accomplish little for others; they find no peace for themselves, but only in death and the grave.

"We confess it is not without a degree of mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted—yet ruined—to so little purpose, with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral in this piece of history, twice told us in our own time. Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep significance. Surely it would become such a man,—furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the poet of the age,—to consider well what it is he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it; for the words of Milton were true at all times, and were never truer than at this: 'He who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem.' If he cannot so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils, are for him. Let him dwindle into a modish ballad-monger, let him worship and be-sing the idols of the time,—and the time will not fail to reward him; if, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity. Byron and Burns could not live as idol priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them; and better it was for them that they could not; for it is not in the favour of the great, nor of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favour, and furtherance for literature: it is like the costliest flower-jar inclosing the loveliest on earth. Yet, let not the relation be mistaken:—a true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures,—their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table wit—he cannot be; their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties let no such union be attempted. Will a courser of the sun work patiently in the harness of a dray horse? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands; and will he lumber on mud highways, dragging ale for earthly appetites from door to door?"

It must be mentioned, in abatement of this high praise, that Burns occasionally speaks with too little delicacy. He violates without necessity the true decorum of his subject, and indulges in hidden meanings and allusions, such as the most tolerant cannot applaud. Nor is this the worst: he is much too free in his treatment of matters holy. He ventures to take the Deity to task about his own passions, and the order of nature, in a way less reverent than he employs when winning his way to woman's love. He has, in truth, touches of profanity which make the pious shudder. In the warmth of conversation such expressions might escape from the lips; but they should not have been coolly sanctioned in the closet with the pen. These deformities are not, however, of frequent occurrence; and, what is some extenuation, they are generally united to a noble or natural sentiment. He is not profane or indecorous for the sake of being so: his faults, as well as his beauties, come from an overflowing fulness of mind.

His songs have all the beauties, and few of the faults, of his poems. As compositions to be sung, a finer and more scientific harmony, and a more nicely-modulated dance of words were required, and Burns had both in perfection. They flow as readily to the music as if both the air and verse had been created together, and blend and mingle like two uniting streams. The sentiments are from nature; and they never, in any instance, jar or jangle with the peculiar feeling of the music. While humming the air over during the moments of composition, the words came and took their proper places, each according to the meaning of the air: rugged expressions could not well mingle with thoughts inspired by harmony.

In his poems, Burns supposes himself in the society of men, and indulges in reckless sentiments and unmeasured language: in his songs he imagines himself in softer company; when woman's eye is on him he is gentle, persuasive, and impassioned; he is never boisterous; he seeks not to say fine things, yet he never misses saying them; his compliments are uttered of free will, and all his thoughts flow naturally from the subject. There is a natural grace and fascination about his songs; all is earnest and from the heart: he is none of your millinery bards who deal in jewelled locks, laced garments, and shower pearls and gems by the bushel on youth and beauty. He makes bright eyes, flushing cheeks, the music of the tongue, and the pulses' maddening play, do all. Those charms he knew came from heaven, and not out of the tire-woman's basket, and would last when fashions changed. It is remarkable that the most naturally elegant and truly impassioned songs in the language were written by a ploughman-lad in honour of the rustic lasses around him.

If we regard the songs of Burns as so many pastoral pictures, we will find that he has an eye for the beauties of nature as accurate and as tasteful as the happiest landscape painter. Indeed he seldom gives us a finished image of female loveliness without the accompaniment of blooming flowers, running streams, waving woods, and the melody of birds: this is the frame-work which sets off the portrait. He has recourse rarely to embellishments borrowed from art; the lighted hall and the thrilling strings are less to him than a walk with her he loves by some lonely rivulet's side, when the dewdrops are beginning to glisten on the lilies and weigh them down, and the moon is moving not unconsciously above them. In all this we may recognize a true poet—one who felt that woman's loveliness triumphed over these fragrant accompaniments, and who regarded her still as the "blood royal of life," the brightest part of creation.

Those who desire to feel, in their full force, the songs of Burns, must not hope it from scientific singers in the theatres. The right scene is the pastoral glen; the right tongue for utterance is that of a shepherd lass; and the proper song is that which belongs to her present feelings. The gowany glen, the nibbling sheep, the warbling birds, and the running stream give the inanimate, while the singer herself personates the living, beauty of the song. I have listened to a country girl singing one of his songs, while she spread her webs to bleach by a running stream—ignorant of her audience—with such feeling and effect as were quite overpowering. This will keep the fame of Burns high among us: should the printer's ink dry up, ten thousand melodious tongues will preserve his songs to remote generations.

The variety, too, of his lyrics is equal to their truth and beauty. He has written songs which echo the feelings of every age and condition in life. He personates all the passions of man and all the gradations of affection. He sings the lover hastening through storm and tempest to see the object of his attachment—the swelling stream, the haunted wood, and the suspicious parents are all alike disregarded. He paints him again on an eve in July, when the air is calm, the grass fragrant, and no sound is abroad save the amorous cry of the partridge, enjoying the beauty of the evening, as he steals by some unfrequented way to the trysting thorn, whither his mistress is hastening; or he limns him on a cold and snowy night, enjoying a brief parley with her whom he loves, from a cautiously opened window, which shews her white arm and bright eyes, and the shadow perhaps of a more fortunate lover, which accounts for the marks of feet impressed in the snow on the way to her dwelling. Nor is he always sighing and vowing; some of his heroes answer scorn with scorn, are saucy with the

saucy, and proud with the proud, and comfort themselves with sarcastic comments on woman and her fickleness and folly; others drop all allegiance to that fantastic idol beauty, and while mirth abounds, and "the wine-cup shines in light," find wondrous solace. He laughs at the sex one moment, and adores them the next—he ridicules and satirizes—he vows and entreats—he traduces and he defies—all in a breath. Burns was intimate with the female heart, and with the romantic mode of courtship practised in the pastoral districts of Caledonia. He was early initiated into all the mysteries of rustic love, and had tried his eloquence with such success among the maidens of the land that one of them said, "Open your eyes and shut your ears with Rob Burns, and there's nae fear o' your heart; but close your eyes and open your ears, and you'll lose it."

Of all lyric poets he is the most prolific and various. Of one hundred and sixty songs which he communicated to Johnson's Museum, all, save a score or so, are either his composition, or amended with such skill and genius as to be all but made his own. For Thomson he wrote little short of a hundred. He took a peculiar pleasure in eking out and amending the old and imperfect songs of his country. He has exercised his fancy and taste to a greater extent that way than antiquarians either like or seem willing to acknowledge. Scott, who performed for the ballads of Scotland what Burns did for many of her songs, perceived this:—"The Scottish tunes and songs," he remarked, "preserved for Burns that inexpressible charm which they have ever afforded to his countrymen. He entered into the idea of collecting their fragments with the zeal of an enthusiast; and few, whether serious or humorous, passed through his hands without receiving some of those magic touches which, without greatly altering the song, restored its original spirit, or gave it more than it previously possessed. So dexterously are those touches combined with the ancient structure, that the *rifacimento*, in many instances, could scarcely have been detected without the avowal of the Bard himself. Neither would it be easy to mark his share in the individual ditties. Some he appears to have entirely re-written; to others he added supplementary stanzas; in some he retained only the leading lines and the chorus; and others he merely arranged and ornamented." No one has ever equalled him in these exquisite imitations: he caught up the peculiar spirit of the old song at once: he thought as his elder brother in rhyme thought, and communicated an antique sentiment and tone to all the verses which he added. Finer feeling, purer fancy, more exquisite touches of nature, and more vigorous thoughts were the result of this intercourse. Burns found Scottish Song like a fruit-tree in winter, not dead, though unbudged; nor

did he leave it till it was covered with bloom and beauty. He sharpened the sarcasm, deepened the passion, heightened the humour, and abated the indelicacy of his country lyrics.

"To Burns' ear," says Wilson—a high judge in all poetic questions—"the lowly lays of Scotland were familiar, and most dear were they all to his heart. Often had he 'sung aloud old songs that are the music of the heart;' and, some day, to be able himself to breathe such strains was his dearest, his highest ambition. His genius and his moral frame were thus imbued with the spirit of our old traditional ballad poetry; and, as soon as all his passions were ripe, the voice of song was on all occasions of deep and tender interest—the voice of his daily, his nightly speech. Those old songs were his models: he felt as they felt, and looked up with the same eyes on the same objects. So entirely was their language his language that all the beautiful lines, and half lines, and single words that, because of something in them most exquisitely true to nature, had survived the rest of the compositions to which they had long ago belonged, were sometimes adopted by him, almost unconsciously it might seem, in his finest inspirations; and oftener still sounded in his ear like a key-note, on which he pitched his own plaintive tune of the heart, till the voice and language of the old and new days were but as one." He never failed to surpass what he imitated: he added fruit to the tree, and fragrance to the flower. That his songs are a solace to Scottish hearts in far lands we know from many sources; the poetic testimony of an inspired witness is all we shall call for at present:—

'Encamped by Indian rivers wild,
The soldier, resting on his arms,
In Burns' carol sweet recalls
The scenes that blessed him when a child,
And glows and gladdens at the charms
Of Scotia's woods and waterfalls.' "

A want of chivalry has been instanced as a radical fault in the lyrics of Burns. He certainly is not of the number who approach beauty with much awe or reverence, and who raise loveliness into an idol for man to fall down and worship. The polished courtesies and romantic affections of high society had not found their way among the maidens of Kyle; the midnight tryste, and the stolen interview—the rapture to meet, and the anguish to part—the secret vow, and the scarce audible whisper, were dear to their bosoms; and they were unacquainted with moving in parallel lines, and breathing sighs into roses, in affairs of the heart. To draw a magic circle of affection round those he loved, which could not be passed without lowering them from the station of angels, forms no part of the lyrical system of Burns' poetic wooing: there is no affectation in him; he speaks like one unconscious of the venerated and

varnished civilities of artificial life; he feels that true love is unacquainted with fashionable distinctions, and in all he has written has thought but of the natural man and woman, and the uninfluenced emotions of the heart. Some have charged him with a want of delicacy—an accusation easily answered: he is rapturous, he is warm, he is impassioned—his heart cannot contain its ecstasies: he glows with emotion as a crystal goblet with wine; but in none of his best songs is there the least indelicacy. Love is with him a leveller: passion and feeling are of themselves as little influenced by fashion and manners as the wind is in blowing, or the sun in shining; chivalry, and even notions of delicacy, are changeable things; our daughters speak no longer with the free tongues of their great grandmothers, and young men no longer challenge wild lions, or keep dangerous castles in honour of their ladies' eyes.

The prose of Burns has much of the original merit of his poetry; but it is seldom so pure, so natural, and so sustained. It abounds with bright bits, fine out-flashings, gentle emotions, and uncommon warmth and ardour. It is very unequal: sometimes it is simple and vigorous: now and then inflated and cumbrous: and he not seldom labours to say weighty and decided things, in which a "double double toil and trouble," sort of labour, is visible. "But hundreds even of his most familiar letters"—I adopt the words of Wilson—"are perfectly artless, though still most eloquent compositions. Simple we may not call them, so rich are they in fancy, so overflowing in feeling, and dashed off in every other paragraph with the easy boldness of a great master, conscious of his strength even at times when, of all things in the world, he was least solicitous about display; while some there are so solemn, so sacred, so religious, that he who can read them with an unstirred heart can have no trust, no hope, in the immortality of the soul." But those who desire to feel him in his strength must taste him in his Scottish spirit. There he spoke the language of life: in English, he spoke that of Education: he had to think in the former before he could express himself in the latter. In the language in which his mother sung and nursed him he excelled: a dialect reckoned barbarous by scholars grew classic and elevated when uttered by the tongue of ROBERT BURNS.

[THE WIDOW, CHILDREN, AND
BROTHER OF BURNS.]

At the time of Burns's decease, his family consisted of his wife and four sons—Robert,

born at Mauchline, in 1786; Francis Wallace, born at Ellisland, April 9, 1791; William Nicol, born at Dumfries, November 21, 1792; and James Glencairn. Francis Wallace, a child of uncommon vivacity, died at the age of fourteen. The three other sons yet (1838) survive. Robert received a good education at the academy of Dumfries, was two Sessions at the university of Edinburgh, and one at the university of Glasgow; and, in 1804, obtained a situation in the Stamp Office, London, where he continued for twenty-nine years, improving a narrow income by teaching the classics and mathematics. It is remarkable that, during that long time he and his mother, though on the best terms, never once met. In 1833, having obtained a superannuation allowance, he retired to Dumfries, where he now lives. He has the dark eyes, large head, and swarthy complexion of his father, and possesses much more than the average of mental capacity. He has written many verses far above mediocrity; but the bent of his mind is towards geometry—a study in which his father was much more accomplished than his biographers seem to have been aware of. William and James went out to India on cadetships, and have each risen to the rank of major in the Company's service. "Wherever these men wander, at home or abroad, they are regarded as the scions of a noble stock, and receive the cordial greetings of hundreds who never saw their faces before, but who account it a happiness to grasp, in friendly pressure, the hand in which circulates the blood of Burns"—*M'Diarmid's Picture of Dumfries*.*

The only dependence of Mrs. Burns, after her husband's death, was on an annuity of ten pounds, arising from a benefit society connected with the Excise, the books and other moveable property left to her, and the generosity of the public. The subscription, as we are informed by Dr. Currie, produced seven hundred pounds; and the works of the poet, as edited with singular taste and judgment by that gentleman, brought nearly two thousand more. One half of the latter sum was lent on a bond to a Gallo-way gentleman, who continued to pay five per cent. for it till a late period. Mrs. Burns was thus enabled to support and educate her family in a manner creditable to the memory of her husband. She continued to reside in the house which had been occupied by her husband and herself, and

—"never changed, nor wished to change, her place."

For many years after her sons had left her to

*Mr. M'Diarmid gives a touching account of the illness and death of one of the daughters of Captain James Glencairn Burns, on her voyage, homewards, from India. "At the funeral of the poor child there was witnessed a most affecting scene. Officers, passengers, and men, were drawn up in regular order on deck; some wore crapes round the right arm, others were dressed in the deepest mourning; every

head was uncovered; and, as the lashing of the waves on the sides of the coffin proclaimed that the melancholy ceremony had closed, every countenance seemed saddened with grief—every eye moistened with tears. Not a few of the sailors wept outright, natives of Scotland, who, even when far away, had revived their recollections of home and youth by listening to, or repeating, the poetry of Burns."

pursue their fortunes in the world, she lived in a decent and respectable manner, on an income which never amounted to more than £62 per annum. At length, in 1817, at a festival held in Edinburgh to celebrate the birth-day of the bard, Mr. Henry (now Lord) Cockburn, acting as president, it was proposed by Mr. Maule of Panmure (now Lord Panmure), that some permanent addition should be made to the income of the poet's widow. The idea appeared to be favourably received, but the subscription did not fill rapidly. Mr. Maule then said that the burden of the provision should fall upon himself, and immediately executed a bond, entitling Mrs. Burns to an annuity of £50 as long as she lived. This act, together with the generosity of the same gentleman to Nathaniel Gow, in his latter and evil days, must ever endear the name of Lord Panmure to all who feel warmly on the subjects of Scottish poetry and Scottish music.

Mr. Maule's pension had not been enjoyed by the widow more than a year and a half, when her youngest son James attained the rank of Captain with a situation in the Commissariat, and was thus enabled to relieve her from the necessity of being beholden to a stranger's hand for any share of her support. She accordingly resigned the pension. Mr. M'Diarmid, who records these circumstances, adds, in another place, that, during her subsequent years, Mrs. Burns enjoyed an income of about two hundred a-year, great part of which, as not needed by her, she dispensed in charities. Her whole conduct in widowhood was such as to secure universal esteem in the town where she resided. She died, March 26, 1834, in the 68th year of her age, and was buried beside her illustrious husband, in the mausoleum at Dumfries.*

Mr. Gilbert Burns, the early companion and at all times the steadfast friend of the poet, continued to struggle with the miserable glebe of Moss-gill till about the year 1797, when he removed to the farm of Dinning, on the estate of Mr. Monteath of Closeburn, in Nithsdale. The poet had lent him £200 out of the profits of the Edinburgh edition of his works, in order that he might overcome some of his difficulties; and he, some years after, united himself to a Miss Brekonridge, by whom he had a family

of six sons and five daughters. On all his boys he bestowed what is called occasional education. In consideration of the support he extended to his widowed mother, the poet seems never to have thought of a reckoning with him for the above sum.

He was a man of sterling sense and sagacity, pious without asceticism or bigotry, and entertaining liberal and enlightened views, without being the least of an enthusiast. His letter to Dr. Currie, given in the ensuing Appendix, shows no mean powers of composition, and embodies nearly all the philanthropic views of human improvement which have been so broadly realised in our own day. We are scarcely more affected by the consideration of the penury under which some of his brother's noblest compositions were penned, than by the reflection that this beautiful letter was the effusion of a man who, with his family, daily wrought long and laboriously under all those circumstances of parsimony which characterise Scottish rural life. Some years after, Mr. Gilbert Burns was appointed by Lady Blantyre to be land-steward or factor upon her estate of Lethington in East-Lothian, to which place he accordingly removed. His conduct in this capacity, during near twenty-five years, was marked by great fidelity and prudence, and gave the most perfect satisfaction to his titled employer. It was not till 1820 that he was enabled to repay, with interest, the money borrowed from his brother in 1788. Being invited by Messrs. Cadell and Davies to superintend, and improve as much as possible, a new edition of the poet's works, he received as much in remuneration for his labour as enabled him to perform this act of duty.

The mother of Robert and Gilbert Burns lived in the household of the latter at Grant's Braes, near Lethington, till 1820, when she died at the age of eighty-eight, and was buried in the churchyard of Bolton. In personal aspect, Robert Burns resembled his mother; Gilbert had the more aquiline features of his father. The portrait of Robert Burns, painted by a Mr. Taylor, and published in an engraved form by Messrs. Constable and Company a few years ago, bore a striking resemblance to Gilbert. This excellent man died at Grant's Braes,

* The household effects of Mrs. Burns were sold by public auction on the 10th and 11th of April, and, from the anxiety of the public to possess relics of this interesting household, brought uncommonly high sums. According to the *Dumfries Courier*, "the auctioneer commenced with small articles, and when he came to a broken copper coffee-pot, there were so many bidders that the price paid exceeded twenty-fold the intrinsic value. A tea-kettle of the same metal succeeded, and reached £2 sterling. Of the linens, a tablecloth, marked 1792, which, speaking commercially, may have been worth half-a-crown or five shillings, was knocked down at £5. 7s. Many other articles commanded handsome prices, and the older and plainer the furniture the better it sold. The rusty iron top of a shower-bath, which Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop sent to the poet when afflicted with rheumatism, was bought by a Carlisle gentleman for £1. 8s.; and

a low wooden kitchen chair, on which the late Mrs. Burns sat when nursing her children, was run up to £3. 7s. The crystal and china were much coveted, and brought, in most cases, splendid prices. Even an old fender reached a figure which would go far to buy half a dozen new ones, and every thing, towards the close, attracted notice, down to greybeards, bottles, and a half-worn pair of bellows. The poet's eight-day clock, made by a Mauchline artist, attracted great attention, from the circumstance that it had frequently been wound up by his own hand. In a few seconds it was bid up to fifteen pounds or guineas, and was finally disposed of for £36. The purchaser had a hard battle to fight; but his spirit was good, and his purse obviously not a light one, and the story ran that he had instructed Mr. Richardson to secure a preference at any sum under £60."

November 8, 1827, aged about sixty-seven years. His sons occupy respectable stations in society. One is factor to Lord Blantyre, and another is minister of the parish of Monkton, near Ayr.

The untimely death of a third, a youth of very promising talents, when on the eve of being admitted to holy orders, is supposed to have hastened the departure of the venerable parent.

Two sisters of Burns, one of whom is by marriage Mrs. Begg, yet survive. They reside in the village of Tranent, East-Lothian.

Through life, and in death, Gilbert Burns maintained, and justified the promise of his virtuous youth, and seems in all respects to have resembled his father, of whom Murdoch, long after he was no more, wrote in language honourable to his own heart:—"O for a world of men of such dispositions: I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude as it is to extol what are called heroic actions; then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of those we see in Westminster Abbey!"

We conclude this edition of his life in the appropriate words of Lockhart. "Burns, short and painful as were his years, has left behind him a VOLUME in which there is inspiration for every fancy, and music for every mood; which lives and will live in strength and vigour; 'to soothe,' as a generous lover of genius, (Sir Egerton Brydges) has said, 'the sorrows of how many a lover, to inflame the patriotism of how many a soldier, to fan the fires of how many a genius, to disperse the gloom of solitude, appease the agonies of pain, encourage virtue, and shew vice its ugliness!' a volume in which centuries hence, as now, wherever a Scotsman may wander, he will find the dearest consolation of his exile. Already in the language of Child Harold, has

GLORY WITHOUT END

SCATTER'D THE CLOUDS AWAY, AND ON THAT NAME ATTEND
THE TEARS AND PRAISES OF ALL TIME!"

My task is ended—farewell, Robin!
My prentice muse stands sad and sobbin'
To think thy country kept thee scrubbin'
Her barmy barrels,
Of strains immortal mankind robbin',
And thee of laurels.

Let learning's Greekish grubs cry Humph!
Hot zealots groan, cold critics grumph,
And ilka starr'd and gartered sumph
Yawn, hum, and ha;

In glory's pack thou art a triumph,
And sweeps them a'.

Round thee flock'd scholars mony a cluster,
And dominies came in a fluster,
In words three span lang 'gan they bluster
Of classic models,
Of Tully's light and Virgil's lustre,
And shook their noddles.

Ye laugh'd, and muttering, "Learning! d—d
her!"
Stood bauldly up, but start or stammer
Wi' Nature's fire for lore and grammar,
And classic rules,
Crush'd them as Thor's triumphant hammer
Smash'd paddock stools.

And thou wert right, and they were wrang--
The sculptor's toil, the poet's sang,
In Greece and Rome frae nature sprang,
And bauld and free,
In sentiment and language strang,
They spake like thee

Thy muse came like a giggling taupie
Dancing her lane; her sangs, sae sappy,
Cheer'd men like drink's inspiring drappie—
Then grave and stern,
High moral truths sublime and happy
She made them learn.

Auld grey-beard Lear, wi' college lantern,
O'er rules of Horace stoitering, venturin'
At song, glides to oblivion saunterin'
And starless night;
Whilst thou, up cleft Parnassus canterin',
Lives on in light.

In light thou liv'st. While birds lo'e simmer,
Wild bees the blossom, buds the timmer,
And man lo'es woman—rosie limmer!
I'll prophetic
Thy glorious halo nought the dimmer
Will ever be.

For me—though both sprung from ae mother,
I'm but a weekly young half brother,
Sae O! forgive my musing swither,
Mid toils benighted,
'Twas lang a wish that nought could smother
To see thee righted.

Frae Kyle, wi' music in her bowers;
Frae fairy glens, where wild Doon pours;
Frae hills, bedropped wi' sunny showers,
On Solway strand,
I've gathered, Burns, thy scattered flowers
Wi' filial hand.

And O! bright and immortal spirit,
If ought that lessens thy rare merit
I've utter'd—like a god thou't bear it,
Thou canst but know
Thy stature few or none can peer it
Now born below.

London, 1834. ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

APPENDIX TO THE LIFE OF BURNS.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

TO BE OBSERVED IN

The Bachelors' Club.

1st. THE club shall meet at Tarbolton every fourth Monday night, when a question on any subject shall be proposed, disputed points of religion only excepted, in the manner hereafter directed; which question is to be debated in the club, each member taking whatever side he thinks proper.

2d. When the club is met, the president, or, he failing, some one of the members, till he come, shall take his seat: then the other members shall seat themselves; those who are for one side of the question, on the president's right hand; and those who are for the other side on his left—which of them shall have the right hand is to be determined by the president. The president, and four of the members being present, shall have power to transact any ordinary part of the society's business.

3d. The club met and seated, the president shall read the question out of the club's book of records (which book is always to be kept by the president); then the two members nearest the president shall cast lots who of them shall speak first, and, according as the lot shall determine, the member nearest the president on that side shall deliver his opinion, and the member nearest on the other side shall reply to him; then the second member of the side that spoke first; then the second member of the side that spoke second—and so on to the end of the company; but if there be fewer members on the one side than on the other, when all the members of the least side have spoken according to their places, any of them, as they please among themselves, may reply to the remaining members of the opposite side; when both sides have spoken, the president shall give his opinion, after which they may go over it a second or more times, and so continue the question.

4th. The club shall then proceed to the choice of a question for the subject of next night's meeting. The president shall first propose one, and any other member who chooses may propose more questions; and whatever one of them is most agreeable to the majority of the members shall be the subject of debate next-club-night.

5th. The club shall, lastly, elect a new president for the next meeting: the president shall first name one, then any of the club may name

another, and whoever of them has the majority of votes shall be duly elected—allowing the president the first vote, and the casting vote upon a par, but none other. Then, after a general toast to mistresses of the club, they shall dismiss.

6th. There shall be no private conversation carried on during the time of debate, nor shall any member interrupt another while he is speaking, under the penalty of a reprimand from the president for the first fault, doubling his share of the reckoning for the second, trebling it for the third, and so in proportion for every other fault; provided always, however, that any member may speak at any time after leave asked, and given by the president. All swearing and profane language, and particularly all obscene and indecent conversation, is strictly prohibited, under the same penalty as aforesaid in the first clause of this article.

7th. No member, on any pretence whatever, shall mention any of the club's affairs to any other person but a brother-member, under the pain of being excluded; and particularly if any member shall reveal any of the speeches or affairs of the club, with a view to ridicule or laugh at any of the rest of the members, he shall be for ever excommunicated from the society; and the rest of the members are desired, as much as possible, to avoid and have no communication with him as a friend or comrade.

8th. Every member shall attend at the meetings, without he can give a proper excuse for not attending; and it is desired that every one who cannot attend will send his excuse with some other member; and he who shall be absent three meetings without sending such excuse shall be summoned to the club-night, when, if he fail to appear, or send an excuse, he shall be excluded.

9th. The club shall not consist of more than sixteen members, all bachelors, belonging to the parish of Tarbolton; except a brother-member marry, and in that case he may be continued, if the majority of the club think proper. No person shall be admitted a member of this society, without the unanimous consent of the club; and any member may withdraw from the club altogether, by giving a notice to the president in writing of his departure.

10th. Every man proper for a member of this society must have a frank, honest, open heart; above any thing dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female

sex. No haughty self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the club, and especially no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall upon any pretence whatever be admitted. In short, the proper person for this society is a cheerful, honest-hearted lad, who, if he has a friend that is true, and a mistress that is kind, and as much wealth as gently to make both ends meet, is just as happy as this world can make him.*

The following interesting letter was addressed to Dr. Currie, the first biographer of Burns. It well deserves a place in this edition:—

A LETTER OF GILBERT BURNS

ON

EDUCATION.

Dinning, Dumfries-shire, 24th Oct. 1800.

DEAR SIR—When I threatened you in my last with a long letter on the subject of the books I recommended to the Mauchline club, and the effects of refinement of taste on the labouring classes of men, I meant merely that I wished to write you on that subject, with the view that, in some future communication to the public, you might take up the subject more at large. I had little expectation, however, that I should overcome my indolence, and the difficulty of arranging my thoughts so far as to put my threat in execution; till some time ago, before I had finished my harvest, having a call from Mr. Ewart, of Manchester, with a message from you, pressing me to the performance of this task, I thought myself no longer at liberty to decline it, and resolved to set about it with my first leisure. I will now therefore endeavour to lay before you what has occurred to my mind, on a subject where people capable of observation, and of placing their remarks in a proper point of view, have seldom an opportunity of making their remarks on real life. In doing this, I may perhaps be led sometimes to write more in the manner of a person communicating information to you which you did not know before, and at other times more in the style of egotism, than I would choose to do to any person in whose candour, and even personal good will, I had less confidence.

There are two several lines of study that open to every man as he enters life: the one,

the general science of life, of duty, and of happiness; the other, the particular arts of his employment or situation in society, and the several branches of knowledge therewith connected. This last is certainly indispensable, as nothing can be more disgraceful than ignorance in the way of one's own profession; and, whatever a man's speculative knowledge may be, if he is ill-informed there, he can neither be a useful nor a respectable member of society. It is nevertheless true that 'the proper study of mankind is man;' to consider what duties are incumbent on him as a rational creature, and a member of society; how he may increase or secure his happiness; and how he may prevent or soften the many miseries incident to human life. I think the pursuit of happiness is too frequently confined to the endeavour after the acquisition of wealth. I do not wish to be considered as an idle declaimer against riches, which, after all that can be said against them, will still be considered by men of common sense as objects of importance, and poverty will be felt as a sore evil, after all the fine things that can be said of its advantages; on the contrary, I am of opinion that a great proportion of the miseries of life arise from the want of economy, and a prudent attention to money, or the ill-directed or intemperate pursuit of it. But however valuable riches may be as the means of comfort, independence, and the pleasure of doing good to others, yet I am of opinion that they may be, and frequently are, purchased at too great a cost, and that sacrifices are made in the pursuit which the acquisition cannot compensate. I remember hearing my worthy teacher, Mr. Murdoch, relate an anecdote to my father, which I think sets this matter in a strong light, and perhaps was the origin, or at least tended to promote this way of thinking in me. When Mr. Murdoch left Alloway, he went to teach and reside in the family of an opulent farmer who had a number of sons. A neighbour coming on a visit, in the course of conversation, asked the father how he meant to dispose of his sons. The father replied that he had not determined. The visitor said that were he in his place he would give them all good education and send them abroad, without, perhaps, having a precise idea where. The father objected that many young men lost their health in foreign countries, and many their lives. True, replied the visitor, but, as you have a number of sons, it will be strange if some one of them does not live and make a fortune.

* [It appears that our poet made more preparation than might be supposed for the discussions of the society at Tarbolton. There were found some detached memoranda, evidently prepared for these meetings; and, amongst others, the heads of a speech on the question mentioned in p. 17, in which, as might be expected, he takes the imprudent side of the question. The following may serve as a farther specimen of the questions debated in the society at Tarbolton:—
"Whether do we derive more happiness from love or friend-

ship?" "Whether between friends, who have no reason to doubt each other's friendship, there should be any reserve?" "Whether is the savage man, or the peasant of a civilised country, in the most happy situation?" "Whether is a young man of the lower ranks of life likeliest to be happy, who has got a good education, and his mind well informed, or he who has just the education and information of those around him?" CURRIE.]

Let any person who has the feelings of a father comment on this story; but though few will avow, even to themselves, that such views govern their conduct, yet do we not daily see people shipping off their sons (and who would do so by their daughters also, if there were any demand for them), that they may be rich or perish?

The education of the lower classes is seldom considered in any other point of view than as the means of raising them from that station to which they were born, and of making a fortune. I am ignorant of the mysteries of the art of acquiring a fortune without anything to begin with, and cannot calculate, with any degree of exactness, the difficulties to be surmounted, the mortifications to be suffered, and the degradation of character to be submitted to, in lending one's self to be the minister of other people's vices, or in the practice of rapine, fraud, oppression, or dissimulation, in the progress; but, even when the wished-for end is attained, it may be questioned whether happiness be much increased by the change. When I have seen a fortunate adventurer of the lower ranks of life returned from the East or West Indies, with all the hauteur of a vulgar mind accustomed to be served by slaves, assuming a character which, from early habits of life, he is ill fitted to support—displaying magnificence which raises the envy of some, and the contempt of others—claiming an equality with the great, which they are unwilling to allow—inly pining at the precedence of the hereditary gentry—maddened by the polished insolence of some of the unworthy part of them—seeking pleasure in the society of men who can condescend to flatter him, and listen to his absurdity for the sake of a good dinner and good wine—I cannot avoid concluding that his brother, or companion, who, by a diligent application to the labours of agriculture, or some useful mechanic employment, and the careful husbanding of his gains, has acquired a competence in his station, is a much happier, and, in the eye of a person who can take an enlarged view of mankind, a much more respectable, man.

But the votaries of wealth may be considered as a great number of candidates striving for a few prizes: and, whatever addition the successful may make to their pleasure or happiness, the disappointed will always have more to suffer, I am afraid, than those who abide contented in the station to which they were born. I wish, therefore, the education of the lower classes to be promoted and directed to their improvement as men, as the means of increasing their virtue, and opening to them new and dignified sources of pleasure and happiness. I have heard some people object to the education of the lower classes of men, as rendering them less useful, by abstracting them from their proper business; others, as tending to make them saucy to their

superiors, impatient of their condition, and turbulent subjects; while you, with more humanity, have your fears alarmed, lest the delicacy of mind, induced by that sort of education and reading I recommended, should render the evils of their situation insupportable to them. I wish to examine the validity of each of these objections, beginning with the one you have mentioned.

I do not mean to controvert your criticism of my favourite books, the *Mirror* and *Lounger*, although I understand there are people, who think themselves judges, who do not agree with you. The acquisition of knowledge, except what is connected with human life and conduct, or the particular business of his employment, does not appear to me to be the fittest pursuit for a peasant. I would say with the poet,

"How empty learning, and how vain is art,
Save where it guides the life, or mends the heart!"

There seems to be a considerable latitude in the use of the word taste. I understand it to be the perception and relish of beauty, order, or any other thing, the contemplation of which gives pleasure and delight to the mind. I suppose it is in this sense you wish it to be understood. If I am right, the taste which these books are calculated to cultivate (besides the taste for fine writing, which many of the papers tend to improve and to gratify), is what is proper, consistent, and becoming in human character and conduct, as almost every paper relates to these subjects.

I am sorry I have not these books by me, that I might point out some instances. I remember two; one, the beautiful story of *La Roche*, where, besides the pleasure one derives from a beautiful simple story, told in M'Kenzie's happiest manner, the mind is led to taste, with heartfelt rapture, the consolation to be derived in deep affliction from habitual devotion and trust in Almighty God. The other, the story of *General W*—, where the reader is led to have a high relish for that firmness of mind which disregards appearances, the common forms and vanities of life, for the sake of doing justice in a case which was out of the reach of human laws.

Allow me then to remark that if the morality of these books is subordinate to the cultivation of taste; that taste, that refinement of mind and delicacy of sentiment which they are intended to give, are the strongest guard and surest foundation of morality and virtue. Other moralists guard, as it were, the overt act; these papers, by exalting duty into sentiment, are calculated to make every deviation from rectitude and propriety of conduct painful to the mind.

"Whose temper'd powers
Refine at length, and every passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien."

I readily grant you that the refinement of mind which I contend for increases our sensibility to the evils of life; but what station of life is without its evils? There seems to be no such thing as perfect happiness in this world, and we must balance the pleasure and the pain which we derive from taste, before we can properly appreciate it in the case before us. I apprehend, that on a minute examination it will appear that the evils peculiar to the lower ranks of life derive their power to wound us more from the suggestions of false pride, and the "contagion of luxury, weak and vile," than the refinement of our taste. It was a favourite remark of my brother, that there was no part of the constitution of our nature to which we were more indebted than that by which "*custom makes things familiar and easy*" (a copy Mr. Murdoch used to set us to write); and there is little labour which custom will not make easy to a man in health if he is not ashamed of his employment, or does not begin to compare his situation with those he may see going about at their ease.

But the man of enlarged mind feels the respect due to him as a man; he has learned that no employment is dishonourable in itself; that while he performs aright the duties of that station in which God has placed him, he is as great as a king in the eyes of Him whom he is principally desirous to please; for the man of taste, who is constantly obliged to labour, must of necessity be religious. If you teach him only to reason, you may make him an atheist, a demagogue, or any vile thing; but if you teach him to feel, his feelings can only find their proper and natural relief in devotion and religious resignation. He knows that those people who are to appearance at ease are not without their share of evils, and that even toil itself is not destitute of advantages. He listens to the words of his favourite poet:—

"Oh, mortal man, that livest here by toil,
Cease to repine and grudge thy hard estate!
That like an emmet thou art ever moul,
Is a sad sentence of an ancient date;
And, certes, there is for it reason great;
Although sometimes it makes thee weep and wail,
And curse thy star, and early drudge, and late;
Withouten that would come an heavier bale,
Loose life, unruly passions, and diseases pale!"

And while he repeats the words, the grateful recollection comes across his mind how often he has derived ineffable pleasure from the sweet song of "nature's darling child." I can say, from my own experience, that there is no sort of farm-labour inconsistent with the most refined and pleasurable state of the mind that I am acquainted with, thrashing alone excepted. That, indeed, I have always considered as insupportable drudgery, and think the ingenious mechanic who invented the thrashing-machine ought to have a statue among the benefactors

of his country, and should be placed in the niche next to the person who introduced the culture of potatoes into this island.

Perhaps the thing of most importance in the education of the common people is to prevent the intrusion of artificial wants. I bless the memory of my worthy father for almost every thing in the dispositions of my mind, and my habits of life, which I can approve of; and for none more than the pains he took to impress my mind with the sentiment, that nothing was more unworthy the character of a man than that his happiness should in the least depend on what he should eat or drink. So early did he impress my mind with this, that, although I was as fond of sweetmeats as children generally are, yet I seldom laid out any of the half-pence which relations or neighbours gave me at fairs in the purchase of them; and, if I did, every mouthful I swallowed was accompanied with shame and remorse; and to this hour I never indulge in the use of any delicacy but I feel a considerable degree of self-reproach and alarm for the degradation of the human character. Such a habit of thinking I consider as of great consequence, both to the virtue and happiness of men in the lower ranks of life. And thus, Sir, I am of opinion that, if their minds are early and deeply impressed with a sense of the dignity of man, as such; with the love of independence and of industry, economy and temperance, as the most obvious means of making themselves independent, and the virtues most becoming their situation, and necessary to their happiness; men in the lower ranks of life may partake of the pleasures to be derived from the perusal of books calculated to improve the mind and refine the taste, without any danger of becoming more unhappy in their situation, or discontented with it. Nor do I think there is any danger of their becoming less useful. There are some hours every day that the most constant labourer is neither at work nor asleep. These hours are either appropriated to amusement or to sloth. If a taste for employing these hours in reading were cultivated, I do not suppose that the return to labour would be more difficult. Every one will allow that the attachment to idle amusements, or even to sloth, has as powerful a tendency to abstract men from their proper business as the attachment to books; while the one dissipates the mind, and the other tends to increase its powers of self-governance.

To those who are afraid that the improvement of the minds of the common people might be dangerous to the state, or the established order of society, I would remark that turbulence and commotion are certainly very inimical to the feelings of a refined mind. Let the matter be brought to the test of experience and observation. Of what description of people are mobs and insurrections composed? are they not uni-

versally owing to the want of enlargement and improvement of mind among the common people? Nay, let any one recollect the characters of those who formed the calmer and more deliberate associations which lately gave so much alarm to the government of this country. I suppose few of the common people who were to be found in such societies had the education and turn of mind I have been endeavouring to recommend. Allow me to suggest one reason for endeavouring to enlighten the minds of the common people. Their morals have hitherto been guarded by a sort of dim religious awe, which from a variety of causes seems wearing off. I think the alteration in this respect considerable, in the short period of my observation. I have already given my opinion of the effects of refinement on morals and virtue. Whenever vulgar minds begin to shake off the dogmas of the religion in which they have been educated, the progress is quick and immediate to downright infidelity; and nothing but refinement of mind can enable them to distinguish between the pure essence of religion and the gross systems which men have been perpetually connecting it with.

In addition to what has already been done for the education of the common people of this country, in the establishment of parish schools, I wish to see the salaries augmented in some proportion to the present expense of living, and the earnings of people of similar rank, endowments, and usefulness, in society; and I hope that the liberality of the present age will be no longer disgraced by refusing, to so useful a class of men such encouragement as may make parish schools worth the attention of men fitted for the important duties of that office. In filling up the vacancies, I would have more attention paid to the candidate's capacity of reading the English language with grace and propriety—to his understanding thoroughly, and having a high relish for, the beauties of English authors, both in poetry and prose—to that good sense and knowledge of human nature which would enable him to acquire some influence on the minds and affections of his scholars—to the general worth of his character, and the love of his king and his country—than to his proficiency in the knowledge of Latin and Greek. I would then have a sort of high English class established, not only for the purpose of teaching

the pupils to read in that graceful and agreeable manner that might make them fond of reading, but to make them understand what they read, and discover the beauties of the author, in composition and sentiment. I would have established in every parish a small circulating library, consisting of the books which the young people had read extracts from in the collections they had read at school, and any other books well calculated to refine the mind, improve the moral feelings, recommend the practice of virtue, and communicate such knowledge as might be useful and suitable to the labouring classes of men. I would have the schoolmaster act as librarian; and, in recommending books to his young friends, formerly his pupils, and letting in the light of them upon their young minds, he should have the assistance of the minister. If once such education were become general, the low delights of the public-house, and other scenes of riot and depravity, would be contemned and neglected; while industry, order, cleanliness, and every virtue which taste and independence of mind could recommend, would prevail and flourish. Thus possessed of a virtuous and enlightened populace, with high delight I should consider my native country as at the head of all the nations of the earth, ancient or modern.

Thus, Sir, have I executed my threat to the fullest extent, in regard to the length of my letter. If I had not presumed on doing it more to my liking, I should not have undertaken it; but I have not time to attempt it anew; nor, if I would, am I certain that I should succeed any better. I have learned to have less confidence in my capacity of writing on such subjects.

I am, dear Sir, your most obedient,
and much obliged humble servant,
GILBERT BURNS.

LETTER FROM MR. GRAY* TO GILBERT BURNS,

CONTAINING OBSERVATIONS ON THE LAST
THREE YEARS OF THE POET'S LIFE.

It was my good fortune to be introduced to the poet soon after I went to Dumfries. This was early in 1794, and I saw him often and intimately during the remainder of his life. I have often been with him in his scenes of merriment, passing with him the social hour. I have

* Mr. Gray, the friend of Burns, was master of the High-school of Dumfries all the time that Burns was there, saw much of him, and was greatly attached to him. He was married to Miss Mary Phillips, eldest sister of my wife. She was the mother of his family, now mostly settled in India. From Dumfries he was translated to the High-school of Edinburgh, where he taught with singular success for upwards of twenty years; but, being disappointed, as he thought very unfairly, in obtaining the rectorship, he left that, and was made rector of the academy of Belfast. There he entered into holy orders, and soon after went out to India as a chaplain in the Honourable East India Company's service. He was settled in Cutch, up high to the mouth of the Indus, and was greatly beloved by all for the primitive sim-

licity of his heart and manners. He was constituted tutor to the prince of that province, the first Christian who was ever so honoured in the East. He died there in September, 1830, deeply regretted both at home and abroad. He was the author of 'Cuna of Cheyd,' and 'The Sabbath among the Mountains,' besides innumerable miscellaneous pieces. He has, moreover, left behind him 'India,'—a poem in MS., and a translation of the Gospels into the Cutch dialect of the Hindostanee. He was a man of genius; but his genius was that of a meteor, it wanted steadying. A kinder and more disinterested heart than his never beat in a human bosom. He is the fifteenth bard of the 'Queen's Wásh,' which see for his character."—Hogg.

been delighted by the constant flashes of a brilliant wit, playful or caustic, as the occasion required; but never disgusted by anything coarse, vicious, or vulgar. I have not unfrequently enjoyed with him the morning walk—seen him clear and unclouded. I was astonished by the extent and promptitude of his information—by his keen inspection into human character—by the natural, warm, and energetic flow of his eloquence—and by the daring flights of his imagination. I have often seen him pourtray, with a pencil dipped in the colours of the rainbow, every thing fair, great, or sublime, in human character or nature at large; and along with those, I ever heard him the zealous advocate of humanity, religion, virtue, and freedom. On these occasions I have heard him quote the English poets, from Shakspeare down to Cowper; while their finest passages seemed to acquire new beauty from his energetic recitation. His countenance, on these occasions, would brighten, and his large dark eyes would sparkle with delight. At other times he would roll them over the purple tints of the morning sky, or the varied beauties of a fine landscape; while he would burst out into glowing descriptions, or enthusiastic strains of adoration, worthy of the royal Hebrew bard.

He seemed to me to frequent convivial parties from the same feelings with which he wrote poetry, because nature had eminently qualified him to shine there, and he never on any occasion indulged in solitary drinking. He was always the living spirit of the company, and, by the communications of his genius, seemed to animate every one present with a portion of his own fire. He indulged in the sally of wit and humour, of striking originality, and sometimes of bitter sarcasm, but always free from the least taint of grossness. I was, from the commencement of my acquaintance with him, struck with his aversion to all kinds of indelicacy, and have seen him dazzle and delight a party for hours together by the brilliancy and rapidity of his flashes, without even an allusion that could give offence to vestal purity.

I often met him at breakfast parties, which were then customary at Dumfries; and on these occasions, if he had been suffering from midnight excesses, it must have been apparent. But his whole air was that of one who had enjoyed refreshing slumbers, and who arose happy in himself, and to diffuse happiness on all around him; his complexion was fresh and clear, his eye brilliant, his whole frame vigorous and elastic, and his imagination ever on the wing. His morning conversations were marked by an impassioned eloquence that seemed to flow from immediate inspiration, and shed an atmosphere of light and beauty around every thing it touched, alternately melting and elevating the souls of all who heard him. In our solitary walks on a summer morning, the simp-

lest floweret by the way-side, every sight of rural simplicity and happiness, every creature that seemed to drink the joy of the seasons, awakened the sympathy of his heart, which flowed in spontaneous music from his lips; and every new opening of the beauty or the magnificence of the scene before him called forth the poetry of his soul.

As a friend, no views of selfishness ever made him faithless to those whom he had once honoured with that name—ever ready to aid them by the wisdom of his counsels, when his means were inadequate to their relief; and, by a delicate sympathy, to soothe the sufferings and the sorrows he could not heal. As a citizen he never neglected a single professional duty; and even on the slender income of an excise officer, he never contracted a single debt he could not pay. He could submit to privations, but could not brook the dependence of owing anything to any man on earth. To the poor he was liberal beyond his limited means, and the cry of the unfortunate was never addressed to him in vain, and when he could not himself relieve their necessities, he was often known, by a pathetic recital of their misfortunes, to draw the tear and open the purse of those who were not famed either for tenderness of heart or charity: on such occasions it was impossible to resist his solicitations.

He was a kind and an attentive father, and took great delight in spending his evenings in the cultivation of the minds of his children. Their education was the grand object of his life, and he did not, like most parents, think it sufficient to send them to public schools; he was their private instructor; and even at that early age, bestowed great pains in training their minds to habits of thought and reflection, and in keeping them pure from every form of vice. This he considered a sacred duty, and never, to his last illness, relaxed in his diligence.

With his eldest son, a boy of not more than nine years of age, he had read many of the favourite poets, and some of the best historians, of our language; and, what is more remarkable, gave him considerable aid in the study of Latin. This boy attended the grammar school of Dumfries, and soon attracted my notice by the strength of his talent, and the ardour of his ambition. Before he had been a year at school, I thought it right to advance him a form; and he began to read Cæsar, and gave me translations of that Author of such beauty as, I confess, surprised me. On enquiry, I found that his father made him turn over his dictionary till he was able to translate to him the passage in such a way that he could gather the Author's meaning, and that it was to him he owed that polished and forcible English with which I was so greatly struck. I have mentioned this incident merely to shew what minute attention he paid to this important branch of parental duty.

Many insinuations have been made against his character as a husband; but I am happy to say that I have in exculpation the direct evidence of Mrs. Burns herself, who, among many amiable and respectable qualities, ranks a veneration for the memory of her departed husband, whom she never named, but in terms of the profoundest respect and the deepest regret, to lament his misfortunes, or to extol his kindnesses to herself, not as the momentary overflowings of the heart, in a season of penitence for offences generously forgiven, but an habitual tenderness that ended only with his life. I place this evidence, which I am proud to bring forward on her own authority, against a thousand anonymous calumnies.

To the very end of his existence, all the powers of his mind were as vigorous as in the blossom of their spring; and it may be asked, if the numerous songs written for Mr. Thomson's collection, which were his last compositions, and by many considered the glory of his genius, indicate any intellectual decay? I saw him four days before he died, and, though the hand of death was obviously upon him, he repeated to me a little poem he had composed the day before, full of energy and tenderness.

Your brother partook, in an eminent degree, of the virtues and the vices of the poetical temperament. He was often hurried into error by the impetuosity of his passions, but he was never their slave; he was often led astray by the meteor lights of pleasure, but he never lost sight of the right way, to which he was ever eager to return; and, amid all his wanderings and his self-conflicts, his heart was pure, and his principles untainted. Though he was often well nigh broken-hearted by the severity of his fate, yet he was never heard to complain; and, had he been an unconnected individual, he would have bid defiance to fortune; but his sorrows for his wife and children, for whom he suffered much, and feared more, were keen and acute: yet unmingled with selfishness. All his life he had to maintain a hard struggle with cares; and he often had to labour under those depressions to which genius is subject; yet his spirit never stooped from its lofty career, and, to the very end of his warfare with himself and with fortune, he continued strong in its independence. The love of posthumous fame was the master passion of his soul, which kept all others in subordination, and prevented them from running into that disorder which his great susceptibility to all those objects which pleased his fancy or interested his heart, and the vivacity of all his emotions might, without this regulating principle, have produced. Amidst the darkest overshadowings of his fate, or the most alluring temptations of pleasure, it was his consoling and leading star; and, as it directed his eye to distant ages, it was often his only support in the one, and the most powerful check

against the dangerous indulgence of the other. Possessing an eloquence that might have guided the councils of nations, and which would have been eagerly courted by any party, he would have perished by famine rather than submit to the degradation of becoming the tool of faction. It is a known fact that he rejected a sum equal to his whole annual income, for the support of those measures which he thought most for the interests of the country. He had a loftiness of sentiment that raised him above making his genius a hireling even in a good cause, and his laurels were never stained by a single act of venality.

Though his chosen companions were not more remarkable for talent than for the respectability of their character, and the purity of their lives, and many ladies, of the most delicate and cultivated minds and elegant manners, were numbered among his friends, who clung to him through good and through bad report, and still cherish an affectionate and enthusiastic regard for his memory, yet has he been accused of being addicted to low company. Qualified for the noblest employments, he was condemned to drudge in the lowest occupations—often in scenes where to avoid contamination was an effort of virtue. Accumulated misfortunes, and the cruelty of mankind, actually broke his heart, and hurried him to a premature grave, which to him has been no sanctuary, for the voice of calumny has been heard even there; but prejudices will pass away, and posterity will do him justice. I shall deem it the proudest work of my life, if my feeble efforts shall be in the slightest degree instrumental in correcting erroneous opinions, which have been too long and too widely circulated.

I am, &c.,
JAMES GRAY.

Phrenological Development OF BURNS.

THE CRANIUM OF BURNS.

At the opening of the Mausoleum, March 1834, for the interment of Mrs. Burns, it was resolved by some citizens of Dumfries, with the concurrence of the nearest relative of the widow, to raise the cranium of the poet from the grave, and have a cast moulded from it, with a view to gratifying the interest likely to be felt by the students of phrenology respecting its peculiar development. This purpose was carried into effect during the night between the 31st March and the 1st April, and the following is the description of the cranium, drawn up at the time by Mr. A. Blacklock, surgeon, one of the individuals present:—

"The cranial bones were perfect in every respect, if we except a little erosion of their

external table, and firmly held together by their sutures; even the delicate bones of the orbits, with the trifling exception of the *os unguis* in the left, were sound, and uninjured by death and the grave. The superior maxillary bones still retained the four most posterior teeth on each side, including the dentes sapientie, and all without spot or blemish; the incisors, cuspidati, &c., had, in all probability, recently dropped from the jaw, for the alveoli were but little decayed. The bones of the face and palate were also sound. Some small portions of black hair, with a very few grey hairs intermixed, were observed while detaching some extraneous matter from the occiput. Indeed, nothing could exceed the high state of preservation in which we found the bones of the cranium, or offer a fairer opportunity of supplying what has so long been desiderated by phrenologists—a correct model of our immortal poet's head: and, in order to accomplish this in the most accurate and satisfactory manner, every particle of sand, or other foreign body, was carefully washed off, and the plaster of Paris applied with all the tact and accuracy of an experienced artist. The cast is admirably taken, and cannot fail to prove highly interesting to phrenologists and others.

Having completed our intention, the skull, securely enclosed in a leaden case, was again committed to the earth, precisely where we found it. ARCHD. BLACKLOCK."

A cast from the skull having been transmitted to the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh, the following view of the cerebral development of Burns was drawn up by Mr. George Combe, and published in connection with four views of the cranium:—

"I.—DIMENSIONS OF THE SKULL.

	Inches.
Greatest circumference, ...	22½
From Occipital Spine to Individuality, over the top of the head, ...	14
— Ear to ear vertically over the top of the head, ...	13
— Philoprogenitiveness to Individuality, (greatest length), ...	8
— Concentrativeness to Comparison, ...	7½
— Ear to Philoprogenitiveness, ...	4½
— Individuality, ...	4½
— Benevolence, ...	5½
— Firmness, ...	5½
— Destructiveness to Destructiveness, ...	5½
— Secretiveness to Secretiveness, ...	5½
— Cautiousness to Cautiousness, ...	5½
— Ideality to Ideality, ...	4½
— Constructiveness to Constructiveness, ...	4½
— Mastoid Process to Mastoid Process, ...	4½

II.—DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANS.

	Scale.
1. Amativeness, rather large	10
2. Philoprogenitiveness, very large, ...	20
3. Concentrativeness, large, ...	18

	Scale
4. Adhesiveness, very large, ...	20
5. Combativeness, very large, ...	20
6. Destructiveness, large, ...	18
7. Secretiveness, large	19
8. Acquisitiveness, rather large, ...	16
9. Constructiveness, full, ...	15
10. Self-Esteem, large, ...	18
11. Love of Approbation, very large, ...	20
12. Cautiousness, large, ...	19
13. Benevolence, very large, ...	20
14. Veneration, large, ...	18
15. Firmness, full, ...	15
16. Conscientiousness, full	15
17. Hope, full, ...	14
18. Wonder, large, ...	18
19. Ideality, large, ...	18
20. Wit, or Mirthfulness, full, ...	15
21. Imitation, large, ...	19
22. Individuality, large, ...	19
23. Form, rather large, ...	16
24. Size, rather large, ...	17
25. Weight, rather large, ...	18
26. Colouring, rather large, ...	16
27. Locality, large, ...	18
28. Number, rather full, ...	12
29. Order, full, ...	14
30. Eventuality, large, ...	18
31. Time, rather large, ...	16
32. Tune, full, ...	15
33. Language, uncertain.	
34. Comparison, rather large, ...	17
35. Causality, large, ...	18

The scale of the organs indicates their relative proportions to each other; 2 is idiocy—10 moderate—14 full—18 large; and 20 very large.

The cast of a skull does not show the temperament of the individual, but the portraits of Burns indicate the bilious and nervous temperaments, the sources of strength, activity, and susceptibility; and the descriptions given by his contemporaries of his beaming and energetic eye, and the rapidity and impetuosity of his manifestations, establish the inference that his brain was active and susceptible.

Size in the brain, other conditions being equal, is the measure of mental power. The skull of Burns indicates a large brain. The length is eight, and the greatest breadth nearly six inches. The circumference is 22½ inches. These measurements exceed the average of Scotch living heads, including the integuments, for which four-eighths of an inch may be allowed.

The brain of Burns, therefore, possessed the two elements of power and activity.

The portions of the brain which manifest the animal propensities are uncommonly large, indicating strong passions, and great energy in action under their influence. The group of organs manifesting the domestic affections

(Amativeness, Philoprogenitiveness, and Adhesiveness) is large; Philoprogenitiveness uncommonly so for a male head. The organs of Combaticiveness and Destructiveness are large, bespeaking great heat of temper, impatience, and liability to irritation.

Secretiveness and Cautiousness are both large, and would confer considerable power of restraint, where he felt restraint to be necessary.

Acquisitiveness, Self-Esteem, and Love of Approbation, are also in ample endowment, although the first is less than the other two; these feelings give the love of property, a high consideration of self, and desire of the esteem of others. The first quality will not be so readily conceded to Burns as the second and third, which, indeed, were much stronger; but the phrenologist records what is presented by nature, in full confidence that the manifestations, when the character is correctly understood, will be found to correspond with the developement, and he states that the brain indicates considerable love of property.

The organs of the moral sentiments are also largely developed. Ideality, Wonder, Imitation, and Benevolence, are the largest in size. Veneration also is large. Conscientiousness, Firmness, and Hope, are full.

The Knowing organs, or those of perceptive intellect, are large; and the organs of Reflection are also considerable, but less than the former. Causality is larger than Comparison, and Wit is less than either.

The skull indicates the combination of strong animal passions with equally powerful moral emotions. If the natural morality had been less, the endowment of the propensities is sufficient to have constituted a character of the most desperate description. The combination, as it exists, bespeaks a mind extremely subject to contending emotions—capable of great good, or great evil—and encompassed with vast difficulties in preserving a steady, even, onward course of practical morality.

In the combination of very large Philoprogenitiveness and Adhesiveness, with very large Benevolence and large Ideality, we find the elements of that exquisite tenderness and refinement, which Burns so frequently manifested even when at the worst stage of his career. In the combination of great Combaticiveness, Destructiveness, and Self-Esteem, we find the fundamental qualities which inspired "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," and similar productions.

The combination of large Secretiveness, Imitation, and the perceptive organs, gives the elements of his dramatic talent and humour. The skull indicates a decided talent for Humour, but less for Wit. The public are apt to confound the talents for Wit and Humour. The metaphysicians, however, have distinguished them, and in the phrenological works their different elements are pointed out. Burns pos-

sessed the talent for satire; Destructiveness, added to the combination which gives Humour, produces it.

An unskilful observer, looking at the forehead, might suppose it to be moderate in size; but when the dimensions of the anterior lobe, in both length and breadth, are attended to, the Intellectual organs will be recognised to have been large. The anterior lobe projects so much that it gives an appearance of narrowness to the forehead which is not real. This is the cause, also, why Benevolence appears to lie farther back than usual. An anterior lobe of this magnitude indicates great intellectual power. The combination of large Perceptive and Reflecting organs (Causality predominant), with large Concentrativeness and large organs of the feelings, gives that sagacity and vigorous common sense for which Burns was distinguished.

The skull rises high above Causality, and spreads wide in the region of Ideality; the strength of his moral feelings lay in that region.

The combination of large organs and the Animal Propensities, with little Cautiousness, and only full Hope, together with the unfavourable circumstances in which he was placed, accounts for the melancholy and internal unhappiness with which Burns was so frequently afflicted. This melancholy was rendered still deeper by bad health.

The combination of Acquisitiveness, Cautiousness, Love of Approbation, and Conscientiousness, is the source of his keen feelings in regard to pecuniary independence. The great power of his Animal Propensities would give him strong temptations to waste; but the combination just mentioned would impose a powerful restraint. The head indicates the elements of an economical character, and it is known that he died free from debt, notwithstanding the smallness of his salary.

No phrenologist can look upon this head, and consider the circumstances in which Burns was placed, without vivid feelings of regret. Burns must have walked the earth with a consciousness of great superiority over his associates in the station in which he was placed—of powers calculated for a far higher sphere than that which he was able to reach, and of passions which he could with difficulty restrain, and which it was fatal to indulge. If he had been placed from infancy in the higher ranks of life, liberally educated, and employed in pursuits corresponding to his powers, the inferior portion of his nature would have lost part of its energy, while his better qualities would have assumed a decided and permanent superiority.

A more elaborate paper on the skull of Burns appeared in the Phrenological Journal, No. XLI. from the pen of Mr. Robert Cox. This gentleman endeavours to show that the charac-

ter of Burns was in conformity with the full development of acquisitiveness. "According to his own descriptions," says Mr. Cox, "he was a man who 'had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it.' That his art in making money was sufficiently moderate there can be no doubt, for he was engaged in occupations which his soul loathed, and thought it below his dignity to accept of pecuniary remuneration for some of his most laborious literary performances. He was, however, by no means insensible to the value of money, and never threw it away. On the contrary, he was remarkably frugal, except when feelings stronger than acquisitiveness came into play—such as benevolence, adhesiveness, and love of approbation; the organs of all which are very large, while acquisitiveness is only rather large. During his residence at Mossgiel, where his revenue was not more than £70, his expenses, as Gilbert mentions, 'never in any one year exceeded his slender income.' It is also well known that he did not leave behind him a shil-

ling of debt; and I have learned from good authority that his household was much more frugally managed at Dumfries than at Ellisland—as in the former place, but not in the latter, he had it in his power to exercise a personal control over the expenditure. I have been told also, that, after his death, the domestic expenses were greater than when he was alive. These facts are all consistent with a considerable development of acquisitiveness, for, when that organ is small, there is habitual inattention to pecuniary concerns, even although the love of independence and dislike to ask a favour be strong. The indifference with respect to money, which Burns occasionally ascribes to himself, appears therefore to savour of affectation—a failing into which he was not unfrequently led by love of approbation and secretiveness. Indeed, in one of his letters to Miss Chalmers, he expressly intimates a wish to be rich." The whole of this essay is highly worthy of perusal by all who take an interest in the character of the Ayr-shire bard.]

POEMS WRITTEN IN MEMORY OF BURNS.

[The following poems form part of a vast number of verses written at various periods and in various moods in memory of Burns: too few perhaps are selected; but to admit all would be to print a volume.]

A POEM ADDRESSED TO BURNS

BY
MR. TELFORD.*

"A great number of manuscript poems," says Dr. Currie, "were found among the papers of Burns, addressed to him by admirers of his genius, from different parts of Britain, as well as from Ireland and America. Among these was a poetical epistle from Mr. Telford, of Shrewsbury, of superior merit. It is written in the dialect of Scotland (of which country Mr. Telford is a native) and in the versification generally employed by our Poet himself. Its object was to recommend to him other subjects of a serious nature, similar to that of 'the Cotter's Saturday Night;' and the reader will find that the advice was happily enforced by example:—

Pursue, O Burns! thy happy style,
"Those manner-painting strains," that while
They bear me northward mony a mile,
Recall the days
When tender joys, with pleasing smile,
Blest my young ways.

I see my fond companions rise,
I join the happy village joys,
I see our green hills touch the skies,
And thro' the woods

I hear the river's rushing noise,
Its roaring floods.†

No distant Swiss with warmer glow,
E'er heard his native music flow,
Nor could his wishes stronger grow,
Than still have mine,
When up this ancient mount‡ I go
With songs of thine.

O happy Bard! thy gen'rous flame,
Was given to raise thy country's fame;
For this thy charming numbers came,
Thy matchless lays;
Then sing and save her virtuous name,
To latest days.

* * * * *
But mony a theme awaits thy muse,
Fine as thy Cotter's sacred views,
Then in such verse thy soul infuse,
With holy air,
And sing the course the pious chuse,
With all thy care.

How with religious awe imprest,
They open lay upon his breast,
And youth and age with fears distrest,
All due prepare,
The symbols of eternal rest,
Devout to share.§

* The late eminent engineer.

† The banks of the Esk, in Dumfries-shire, are here alluded to.

‡ A beautiful little mount, which stands a little before, or

rather forms a part of, Shrewsbury Castle, a seat of Sir William Pulteney, Bart.

§ The sacrament, generally administered in the country parishes of Scotland in the open air.

How down ilk lang withdrawing hill,
 Successive crowds the valleys fill,
 While pure religious converse still
 Beguiles the way,
 And gives a cast to youthful will,
 To suit the day.

How placed along the sacred board,
 Their hoary pastor's looks ador'd;
 His voice with peace and blessings stor'd,
 Sent from above;
 And faith, and hope, and joy afford,
 And boundless love.

O'er this with warm seraphic glow,
 Celestial beings pleased bow,
 And, whisper'd, hear the holy vow,
 'Mid grateful tears;
 And mark amid such scenes below
 Their future peers.

* * *
 O mark the awful, solemn scene!*
 When hoary winter clothes the plain,
 Along the snowy hills is seen
 Approaching slow,
 In mourning weeds the village train,
 In silent woe.

Some much-respected brother's bier
 (By turns in pious task they share)
 With heavy hearts they forward bear
 Along the path;
 Where neibours saw, in dusky air,†
 The light of death.

And when they pass the rocky brow,
 Where binwood bushes o'er them flow,
 And move around the rising knowe,
 Where far away
 The kirk-yard trees are seen to grow,
 By th' water brae.

Assembled round the narrow grave,
 While o'er them wintry tempests rave,
 In the cold wind their grey locks wave,
 As low they lay
 Their brother's body 'mongst the lave
 Of parent clay.

Expressive looks from each declare
 The griefs within their bosoms bear,
 One holy vow devout they share,
 Then home return,
 And think o'er all the virtues fair
 Of him they mourn.

* * *
 Say how, by early lessons taught,
 (Truth's pleasing air is willing caught)
 Congenial to th' untainted thought,
 The shepherd boy,
 Who tends his flocks on lonely height,
 Feels holy joy.

Is aught on earth so lovely known,
 On sabbath morn, and far alone,
 His guileless soul all naked shown
 Before his God?
 Such pray'rs must welcome reach the throne,
 And blest abode.

O tell! with what a heartfelt joy,
 The parent eyes the virtuous boy;
 And all his constant kind employ
 Is how to give
 The best of lear he can enjoy,
 As means to live.

The parish school, its curious site,
 The master who can clear indite,
 And lead him on to count and write,
 Demand thy care;
 Nor pass the ploughman's school at night
 Without a share.

Nor yet the tenty curious lad,
 Who o'er the ingle hings his head,
 And begs of neibours books to read;
 For hence arise
 Thy country's sons who far are spread,
 Baith bauld and wise.

* * *
 The bonny lasses, as they spin,
 Perhaps with Allan's sangs begin,
 How Tay and Tweed smooth flowing rin
 Thro' flow'ry bows;
 Where shepherd lads their sweethearts win
 With earnest vows.

Or maybe, Burns, thy thrilling page,
 May a' their virtuous thoughts engage,
 While playful youth and placid age
 In concert join
 To bless the Bard who, gay or sage,
 Improves the mind.

* * *
 Long may their harmless, simple ways,
 Nature's own pure emotions raise;
 May still the dear romantic blaze
 Of purest love,
 Their bosoms warm to latest days,
 And aye improve.

May still each fond attachment glow,
 O'er woods, o'er streams, o'er hills of snow,
 May rugged rocks still dearer grow,
 And may their souls
 Even love the warlock glens which through
 The tempest howls.

To eternize such themes as these,
 And all their happy manners seize,
 Will every virtuous bosom please,
 And high in fame,
 To future times will justly raise
 Thy patriot name.

* A Scottish funeral.

† This alludes to a superstition prevalent in Eskdale and

Annandale, that a light precedes in the night every funeral, marking the precise path it is to pass.

While all the venni tribes decay,
That bask in flatt'ry's flaunting ray,
The noisome vermin of a day,
Thy works shall gain
O'er every mind a boundless sway,
And lasting reign.

When winter binds the harden'd plains,
Around each hearth, the hoary swains,
Shall teach the rising youth thy strains,
And anxious say
Our blessing with our sons remains,
And BURNS'S LAY!

ON THE DEATH OF BURNS.

BY
WILLIAM ROSCOE.

REAR high thy b'cak majestic hills,
Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread,
And, SCOTIA, pour thy thousand rills,
And wave thy heaths with blossoms red.
But ah! what poet now shall tread
Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,
Since he, the sweetest bard is dead
That ever breath'd the soothing strain?

As green thy towering pines may grow,
As clear thy streams may speed along,
As bright thy summer suns may glow,
As gaily charm thy feathery throng;
But now, unheeded is the song,
And dull and lifeless all around,
For his wild harp lies all unstrung,
And cold the hand that wak'd its sound.

What tho' thy vigorous offspring rise,
In arts, in arms, thy sons excel;
Tho' beauty in thy daughters' eyes,
And health in every feature dwell;
Yet who shall now their praises tell,
In strains impassion'd, fond and free,
Since he no more the song shall swell
To love, and liberty, and thee?

With step-dame eye and frown severe
His hapless youth why didst thou view?
For all thy joys to him were dear,
And all his vows to thee were due:
Nor greater bliss his bosom knew,
In opening youth's delightful prime,
Than when thy favoring ear he drew
To listen to his chaunted rhyme.

Thy lonely wastes and frowning skies
To him were all with rapture fraught;
He heard with joy the tempest rise
That wak'd him to sublimer thought:
And oft thy winding dells he sought,
Where wild flowers pour'd their rathe perfume,
And with sincere devotion brought
To thee the summer's earliest bloom.

But ah! no fond paternal smile
His unprotected youth enjoy'd;

His limbs inur'd to early toil,
His days with early hardships tried:
And more to mark the gloomy void,
And bid him feel his misery,
Before his infant eyes would glide
Day-dreams of immortality.

Yet, not by cold neglect depress'd,
With sinewy arm he turn'd the soil.
Sunk with the evening sun to rest,
And met at morn his earliest smile.
Wak'd by his rustic pipe, meanwhile
The powers of fancy came along,
And sooth'd his lengthen'd hours of toil
With native wit and sprightly song.

—Ah! days of bliss too swiftly fled,
When vigorous health from labour springs,
And bland contentment smoothes the bed,
And sleep his ready opiate brings;
And hovering round on airy wings
Float the light forms of young desire,
That of unutterable things
The soft and shadowy hope inspire.

Now spells of mightier power prepare,
Bid brighter phantoms round him dance;
Let flattery spread her viewless snare,
And fame attract his vagrant glance;
Let sprightly pleasure too advance,
Unveil'd her eyes, unclasp'd her zone,
'Till lost in love's delirious trance
He scorn the joys his youth has known.

Let friendship pour her brightest blaze,
Expanding all the bloom of soul;
And mirth concenter all her rays,
And point them from the sparkling bowl;
And let the careless moments roll
In social pleasures unconfin'd,
And confidence that spurns control
Unlock the inmost springs of mind;

And lead his steps those bowers among,
Where elegance with splendor vies,
Or science bids her favor'd throng
To more refin'd sensations rise:
Beyond the peasant's humble joys,
And freed from each laborious strife,
There let him learn the bliss to prize
That waits the sons of polish'd life.

Then, whilst his throbbing veins beat high
With every impulse of delight,
Dash from his lips the cup of joy,
And shroud the scene in shades of night;
And let despair, with wizard light,
Disclose the yawning gulf below,
And pour incessant on his sight
Her specter'd ills and shapes of woe.

And shew beneath a cheerless shed,
With sorrowing heart and streaming eyes,
In silent grief where droops her head,
The partner of his early joys;

And let his infant's tender cries
His fond parental succour claim,
And bid him hear in agonies
A husband's and a father's name.

'Tis done, the powerful charm succeeds;
His high reluctant spirit bends;
In bitterness of soul he bleeds,
Nor longer with his fate contends,
An idiot laugh the welkin rends
As genius thus degraded lies;
'Till pitying Heaven the veil extends
That shrouds the Poet's ardent eyes.

—Rear high thy bleak majestic hills,
Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread,
And, SCOTIA, pour thy thousand rills
And wave thy heaths with blossoms red;
But never more shall poet tread
Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,
Since he, the sweetest bard is dead
That ever breath'd the soothing strain.

ODE TO THE MEMORY OF BURNS.

BY
THOMAS CAMPBELL.

Soul of the Poet! wheresoe'er,
Reclaimed from earth, thy genius plume
Her wings of immortality,
Suspend thy harp in happier sphere,
And with thine influence illumine
The gladness of our jubilee.

And fly like fiends from secret spell,
Discord and strife at Burns's name,
Exorcised by his memory;
For he was chief of bards that swell
The heart with songs of social flame
And high delicious revelry.

And love's own strain to him was given
To warble all its extacies
With Pythian words, unsought, unwilling
Love, the surviving gift of heaven,
The choicest sweet of paradise
In life's else bitter cup distilled.

Who that has melted o'er his lay
To Mary's soul in heaven above,
But pictured sees, in fancy strong,
The landscape and the livelong day
That smiled upon their mutual love,—
Who, that has felt, forgets the song?

Nor skilled one flame above to fan
His country's high-souled peasantry;
What patriot pride he taught;—how much

To weigh the inborn worth of man!
And rustic life and poverty
Grow beautiful beneath his touch.

Him in his clay-built cot the muse
Entranced, and showed him all the forms
Of fairy-light and wizard gloom,
(That only gifted poet views)
The genii of the floods and storms,
And martial shades from glory's tomb.

On Bannock-field what thoughts arouse
The swain whom Burns's song inspires?
Beat not his Caledonian veins,
As o'er the heroic turf he ploughs,
With all the spirit of his sires,
And all their scorn of death and chains?

And see the Scottish exile, tanned
By many a far and foreign clime,
Bend o'er his home-born verse and weep,
In memory of his native land,
With love that scorns the lapse of time,
And ties that stretch beyond the deep.

Encamped by Indian rivers wild,
The soldier resting on his arms,
In Burns's carol sweet recalls
The scenes that blest him when a child,
And glows and gladdens at the charms
Of Scotia's woods and waterfalls.

O deem not, midst this worldly strife,
An idle art the poet brings;
Let high philosophy controul,
And sages calm the stream of life;
'Tis he refines its fountain springs,
The nobler passions of the soul.

It is the muse that consecrates
The native banner of the brave,
Unfurling at the trumpet's breath
Rose, thistle, harp—'tis she elates
To sweep the field or ride the wave,
A sunburst in the storm of death.

And thou, young hero, when thy pall
Is crossed with mournful sword and plume,
When public grief begins to fade,
And only tears of kindred fall,
Who but the bard shall dress thy tomb,
And greet with fame thy gallant shade?

Such was the soldier;—Burns, forgive
That sorrows of mine own intrude
In strains to thy great memory due.
In verse like thine, oh! could he live
The friend I mourned, the brave, the good,
Edward* that died at Waterloo!

* Major Edward Hodge, of the 7th Hussars, who fell at the head of his squadron in the attack on the Polish lancers.

ADDRESS TO THE SONS OF BURNS
ON
VISITING HIS GRAVE.

BY
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

MID crowded obelisks and urns
I sought the untimely grave of Burns:
Sons of the bard my heart still mourns
 With sorrow true;
And more would grieve, but that it turns
 Trembling to you!

Through twilight shades of good and ill
Ye now are panting up life's hill,
And more than common strength and skill
 Must ye display,
If ye would give the better will
 Its lawful sway.

Hath nature strung your nerves to bear
Intemperance with less harm, beware!
But if the poet's wit ye share,
 Like him can speed
The social hour—for tenfold care
 There will be need.

Even honest men delight will take
To spare your failings for his sake,
Will flatter you,—and fool and rake
 Your steps pursue;
And of your father's name will make
 A snare for you.

Far from their noisy haunts retire,
And add your voices to the quire
That sanctify the cottage fire
 With service meet;
There seek the genius of your sire,
 His spirit greet.

Or where mid "lonely heights and hows"
He paid to nature tuneful vows;
Or wiped his honourable brows,
 Bedewed with toil,
While reapers strove, or busy ploughs
 Upturned the soil.

His judgment with benignant ray
Shall guide, his fancy cheer, your way;
But ne'er to a seductive lay
 Let faith be given;
Nor deem that "light which leads astray"
 Is light from heaven."

Let no mean hope your souls enslave;
Be independent, generous, brave;
Your father such example gave,
 And such revere;
But be admonished by his grave,
 And think and fear!

1803.

TO A FRIEND

WHO HAD HADDED HIS INTENTION OF WRITING
NO MORE POETRY.

BY
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

DEAR Charles, whilst yet thou wert a babe, I
That genius plunged thee in that wizard tount
Hight Castalie: and (sureties of thy faith)
That Pity and Simplicity stood by, [nounce
And promised for thee that thou shouldst re-
The world's low cares and lying vanities,
Steadfast and rooted in the heavenly muse,
And washed and sanctified to poesy. [hand
Yes—thou wert plunged, but with forgetful
Held, as by Thetis erst her warrior son;
And with those recreant unbaptized heels
Thou'rt flying from thy bounden ministries—
So sore it seems and burthensome a task [dead?
To weave unwithering flowers. Is thy Burns
Thy Burns, and nature's own beloved bard,
Who to the "Illustrious" of his native land
So properly did look for patronage."
Ghost of Mæcenas! hide thy blushing face!
They snatched him from the sickle and the
To gauge ale firkins. [plough

Oh! for shame return!
On a bleak rock, mid-way the Aonian mount,
There stands a lone and melancholy tree,
Whose aged branches to the midnight blast
Make solemn music: pluck its darkest bough
Ere yet the unwholesome night-dew be enhaled,
And, weeping, wreath it round thy poet's tomb.
Then in the outskirts, where pollutions grow,
Pick the rank henbane, and the dusky flowers
Of night-shade, or its red and tempting fruit;
These, with stopped nostril and glove-guarded
Knit in nice intertexture, so to twine [hand
The illustrious brow of Scotch nobility!

1796

ON THE ANNIVERSARY

OF
BURNS'S BIRTH-DAY.

BY
JAMES MONTGOMERY

WHAT bird in beauty, flight, or song,
Can with the bard compare,
Who sang as sweet and soar'd as strong
As ever child of air?

His plume, his note, his form could Burns,
For whim or pleasure, change;
He was not one, but all by turns,
With transmigration strange:—

* This is taken verbatim from Burns' dedication of his poems to the nobility and gentry of the Caledonian Hunt.

The blackbird, oracle of spring,
When flow'd his moral lay;
The swallow, wheeling on the wing,
Capriciously at play :—

The humming-bird, from bloom to bloom
Inbalg heavenly balm;
The raven in the tempest's gloom;
The halcyon in the calm :—

In "auld Kirk Alloway," the owl,
At witching time of night;
By "bonnie Doon," the earliest fowl
That carolled to the light.

He was the wren amidst the grove,
When in his homely vein;
At Bannock-burn, the bird of Jove,
With thunder in his train :—

The woodlark, in his mournful hours;
The goldfinch, in his mirth;
The thrush, a spendthrift of his powers,
Enrapturing heaven and earth :—

The swan, in majesty and grace,
Contemplative and still;
But roused,—no falcon in the chase
Could, like his satire, kill :—

The linnet in simplicity;
In tenderness, the dove;
—But, more than all beside, was he
The nightingale, in love.

Oh! had he never stoop'd to shame,
Nor lent a charm to vice,
How had devotion loved to name
That bird of Paradise!

Peace to the dead!—In Scotia's choir
Of minstrels, great and small,
He sprang from his spontaneous fire,
The Phoenix of them all!

ROBIN'S AWA!

ALB—'There will e'er be peace till Jamie comes hame.'

BY

THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD.

AN night i' the gloaming, as late I pass'd by,
A lassie sang sweet as she milkit her kye, [fa'—
An' this was her sang, while the tears down did
O there's nae bard o' nature sin' Robin's awa!
The bards o' our country, now sing as they may,
The best o' their ditties but maks my heart wae;
I or at the blithe strain there was ane beat
them a'—
O there's nae bard o' nature sin' Robin's awa!

Auld Wat he is wily and pleases us fine,
Wi' his lang-nebbit tales an' his ferlies lang-
syne;

Young Jack is a dreamer, Will sings like a crow.
An' Davie an' Delta, are dowy an' slaw;
Trig Tam frae the Heelands was aince a braw
man;
Poor Jamie he blunders an' sings as he can;
There's the Clerk an' the Sodger, the News-
man an' a',
They but gar me greet sairer for him that's awa!

'Twas he that could charm wi' the wauff o' his
tongue,

Could rouse up the auld an' enliven the young
An cheer the blithe hearts in the cot an' the ha,
O there's nae bard o' nature sin' Robin's awa!
Nae sangster amang us has half o' his art,
There was nae fonder lover, an' nae kinder heart;
Then wae to the wight wha wad wince at a
flaw,
To tarnish the honours of him that's awa!

If he had some fauts I cou'd never them see,
They're nae to be sung by sic gilpies as me,
He likit us weel, an we likit him a',—
O there's nae sickan callan sin' Robin's awa!
Whene'er I sing late at the milkin my kye,
I look up to heaven an' say with a sigh, [a',—
Although he's now gane, he was king o' them
Ah! there's nae bard o' nature sin' Robin's
awa!

ON BURNS'S ANNIVERSARY.

BY

HUGH AINSLIE.

We meet not here to honour one
To gear or grandeur born,
Nor one whose bloodiness of soul
Hath crowns and kingdoms torn.

No, tho' he'd honours higher far
Than lordly things have known,
His titles spring not from a prince,
His honour from a throne.

Nor needs the bard of Coila arts
His honour to prolong;
No flattery, to gild his fame;
No record but his song.

O! while old Scotia hath sours
Can feel his social mirth,
So long shall worth and honesty
Have brothers upon earth.

So long as lovers, with his song,
Can spurn at shining dust,
So long hath faithful woman's breast
A bosom she may trust.

And while his independent strain
Can make one spirit glow,
So long shall freedom have a friend,
And tyranny a foe!

Here's to the social, honest man,
Auld Scotland's boast and pride !
And here's to Freedom's worshippers
Of every tongue and tribe.

And here's to them, this night, that meet
Out o'er the social bowl,
To raise to Coila's darling son
A monument of soul.

What heart hath ever matched his flame ?
What spirit matched his fire ?
Peace to the prince of Scottish song,
Lord of the bosom's lyre !

VERSES
TO THE MEMORY OF BURNS.

BY
FITZGREEN HALLECK, OF NEW YORK.
ON VIEWING THE REMAINS OF A ROSE BROUGHT FROM
ALLOWAY KIRK, IN AUTUMN 1822.

WILD rose of Alloway—my thanks !
Thou mind'st me of that autumn noon
When first we met upon "the banks
And braes of bonnie Doon."

Like thine, beneath the thorn-tree's bough,
My sunny hour was glad and brief ;
We've cross'd the winter sea, and thou
Art wither'd, flower and leaf !

And will not thy death doom be mine,
The doom of all things wrought of clay,
And wither'd my life's leaf like thine,
Wild rose of Alloway ?

Not so HIS memory, for whose sake
My bosom bore thee far and long ;
His—who a humbler flower could make
Immortal as his song ;—

The memory of Burns—a name
That calls, when brimmed her festal cup,
A nation's glory and her shame,
In silent sadness up.

A nation's glory—be the rest
Forgot—she's canonized his mind ;
And it is joy to speak the best
We may of human kind.

I've stood beside the cottage-bed
Where the bard-peasant first drew breath,
A straw-thatch'd roof above his head,
A straw-wrought couch beneath.

And I have stood beside the pile,
His monument—that tells to heaven
The homage of earth's proudest isle
To that bard-peasant given.

There have been loftier themes than his,
And longer scrolls, and louder lyres,
And lays lit up with poesy's
Purer and holier fires.

Yet read the names that know not death—
Few nobler odes than Burns are there,
And few have won a greener wreath
Than that which binds his hair.

His is that language of the heart
In which the answering heart would speak,
Thought, word, that bids the warm tear start,
Or the smile light the cheek.

And his, that music to whose tone
The common pulse of man keeps time,
In cot or castle's mirth or moan,
In cold or sunny clime.

What sweet tears dim the eyes unshed,
What wild vows falter on the tongue,
When "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,"
Or "Auld Lang Syne," is sung !

Pure hopes that lift the soul above,
Come with the cotter's hymn of praise,
And dreams of youth, and truth, and love,
With "Logan's" banks and braes.

And when he breathes his master-lay
Of Alloway's witch-haunted wall,
All passions in our frames of clay
Come thronging at his call.

Imagination's world of air,
And our own world, its gloom and glee,
Wit, pathos, poetry are there,
And death's sublimity.

Praise to the bard ! his words are driven,
Like flower-seeds by the far winds sown,
Where'er beneath the sky of heaven
The birds of fame have flown.

Praise to the man ! a nation stood
Beside his coffin with wet eyes,
Her brave, her beautiful, her good,
As when a loved one dies.

And still, as on his funeral day,
Men stand his cold-earth couch around,
With the mute homage that we pay
To consecrated ground.

And consecrated ground it is,
The last, the hallowed home of one
Who lives upon all memories,
Though with the buried gone.

Such graves as his are pilgrim shrines,
Shrines to no code or creed confined—
The Delphian vales, the Palestines,
The Meccas of the mind.

Sages with wisdom's garland wreathed,
Crown'd kings and mitred priests of power,
And warriors with their bright swords sheathed,
The mightiest of the hour ;

And lowlier names, whose humble home
Is lit by fortune's dimmer star,
Are there—o'er wave and mountain come,
From countries near and far ;

Pilgrims whose wandering feet have pressed
The Switzer's snow, the Arab's sand,
Or trod the piled leaves of the West,
My own green forest land.

All ask the cottage of his birth,
Gaze on the scenes he loved and sung,
And gather feelings not of earth
His fields and streams among.

They linger by the Doon's low trees,
And pastoral Nith, and wooded Ayr,
And round thy sepulchres, Dumfries,
The poet's tomb is there !

But what to them the sculptor's art,
His funeral columns, wreaths, and urns,
Were there not graven on the heart
The name of Robert Burns ?

ON BURNS.

BY ANDREW MERCER.

THE lark that builds the lowest nest
Soars on the highest wing ;
She mounts aloft with dewy breast,
And hails the opening spring.

In ambient heaven her course is bright,
Wild carolling on high ;
Remote, beyond the reach of sight ;
Her voice is melody.

Burns ! like the lark, thy home was low,
Like her thy song was sweet ;
The daisy on the mountain's brow
Was not more " neighbour meet."

In rustic numbers warbling wild,
Thine were the sweetest strains
That ever in the lowly field
Delighted Scottish swains.

They will delight from age to age,
And wide thy glory spread ;
As the wise sayings of the sage
Seem wiser when he's dead.

Tho' here thy course was but a span,
And early sunk in gloom,
Thine immortality began,
And dated from the tomb.

Like as the bird that fable sings
From ashes grows anew,
And soars on still more vigorous wings,
And far more glorious hue.

So, Burns, until the end of time,
Thy fare shall still abound !
In voice unborn, in untrod clime,
Thy song shall yet resound.

LINES

FOR THE DUMFRIES ANNIVERSARY, COMMEMORATIVE OF

ROBERT BURNS.

BY

MRS. G. E. RICHARDSON, OF LANGHOLME.

WHERE Scotia's minstrel pour'd along
His noontide waves of gushing song,
Vigorous and free, as fringed sweep
Of ocean billows o'er the deep ;—
Where flowed his last, his requiem strains,
And where his honoured dust remains,
Pilgrims from many lands have come
To view and moralize—his tomb ;
They gaze on that pale marble show
Of ardent life with awe and woe,—
That seems to stand in mockery there.
A sentinel o'er a plundered shrine !
A dial severed from the sun !
Till the soul's deeper homage done,
Breaks forth the tributary line.
As echo answers to the air,
Cold, cold and rocky though she be ;
His chiselled rest hath often rung
With notes by deepest feelings strung !
And not the less the spell prevailed,
That sculpture's triumph here hath failed.
As well a marble sun might warm,
As mortal art pourtray the fire,
The glow, the intellectual charm,
That halo'd round that *living lyre*.
The soul-less form, the frigid tone,
Say eloquently—He is gone !—
But blame not sculpture's bounded power,
That reaches but life's scentless flower !
And oh ! for memories need we turn
To the cold artificial urn ;
While yet remain the sun, the sky,
The stream that waked his minstrelsy ?
The daisy, or the hare-bell blue,
Each simplest flower that sips the dew :
Beneath his touch a wreath would bow,
Worthy to bind Apollo's brow.
He struck a war-note—Valour heard,
And made his song her gath'ring word !
And Love, the tyrant of his own,
In other's breasts a purer tone,
A holier, tenderer breath respires,
For listening to his Doric wires.
Go to his "Cotter's Hearth," and read
The beauty of his nation's creed !
See piety, in simplest vest
(To eye, and ear, and soul address,) Plead for the inspir'd artist, who
Her reverend form so chastely drew ;
No altar-piece in bigot lands,
A deeper, holier thrill commands !

Oh ! give his errors to the dust,
 And be to perilous genius just.
 That "ark which bravely through the waves,
 Of deluge-time earth's spices saves !"
 Into what distant lands have gone
 The hearts his song e'er breath'd upon,
 Nor carried with them warmer love
 Of kindred, country, and of home ?
 By Mississippi's, Ganges' stream,
 In fancy Scotia's sons will roam
 Nith's, Devon's banks, nor idly dream !
 The moon that lights on foreign plain
 Her exil'd soldier, on the main
 Her wand'ring sailor hears his lays,
 That bring sweet thoughts of early days ;
 (As dews to drooping leaves arrive
 Their fading freshness to revive ;)
 Oft caroll'd in that social hour,
 And patriot passion owns their power.
 For gifted was our master-hand
 To tune the hearts of every land ;
 His voice could sweeter utterance give
 To nature's universal tone ;
 To latest time his name shall live,
 For nature's harp was all his own.
 Flow verse for ever o'er his tomb !
 No other song with his may vie ;
 But he who mark'd the daisy's bloom,
 Though plum'd to range the empyrean high,
 And lov'd the linnet's lowly lay,—
 Ne'er scorned the faintliest—shed perfume
 That nature's worshippers would pay,
 If but the incense flow'd sincere,
 And oh, such worshippers are here !

TO THE

MEMORY OF ROBERT BURNS.

BY EDWARD RUSHTON.

POOR, wildly sweet uncultur'd flow'r,
 Thou lowliest of the Muse's bow'r,
 "Stern ruin's ploughshare, 'mang the stowre,
 Has crush'd thy stem,"
 And sorrowing verse shall mark the hour,
 "Thou bonnie gem."

'Neath the green turf, dear Nature's child,
 Sublime, pathetic, artless, wild,
 Of all thy quips and cranks despoil'd,
 Cold dost thou lie !
 And many a youth and maiden mild
 Shall o'er thee sigh !

Those pow'rs that, eagle wing'd, could soar,
 That heart which ne'er was cold before,
 That tongue which caus'd the table roar,
 Are now laid low,
 And Scotia's sons shall hear no more
 Thy rapt'rous flow.

Warm'd with "a spark o' nature's fire,"
 From the rough plough thou did'st aspire
 To make a sordid world admire :
 And few like thee,

Oh ! BURNS, have swept the minstrel's lyre
 With ecstasy.

Ere winter's icy vapours fail,
 The violet, in the uncultur'd dale,
 So sweetly scents the passing gale
 That shepherd boys,
 Led by the fragrance they inhale,
 Soon find their prize.

So when to life's chill glens confin'd,
 Thy rich, tho' rough untutor'd mind
 Pour'd on the sense of each rude hind
 Such sonsy lays
 That to thy brow was soon assign'd
 The wreath of praise.

Anon, with nobler daring blest,
 The wild notes throbbing in thy breast,
 Of friends, wealth, learning unpossess'd,
 Thy fervid mind
 Tow'rd's fame's proud turrets boldly press'd,
 And pleas'd mankind.

But what avail'd thy powers to please,
 When want approach'd and pale disease ;
 Could these thy infant brood appease
 That wait'd for bread ?
 Or could they, for a moment, ease
 Thy wo-worn head ?

Applause, poor child of minstrelsy,
 Was all the world e'er gave to thee ;
 Unmov'd, by pinching penury
 They saw thee torn,
 And now, kind souls ! with sympathy,
 Thy loss they mourn.

Oh ! how I loathe the bloated train,
 Who oft hath heard thy dulcet strain ;
 Yet, when thy frame was rack'd with pain,
 Could keep aloof,
 And eye with opulent disdain
 Thy lowly roof.

Yes, proud Dumfries, oh ! would to Heaven
 Thou had'st from that cold spot been driven,
 Thou might'st have found some shelt'ring haven
 On this side Tweed :
 Yet, ah ! e'en here, poor bards have striven
 And died in need.

True genius scorns to flatter knaves,
 Or crouch amidst a race of slaves ;
 His soul, while fierce the tempest raves,
 No tremor knows,
 And with unshaken nerve he braves
 Life's pelting woes.

No wonder, then, that thou shouldst find
 Th' averted glance of half mankind :
 Should'st see the sly, slow, supple mind
 To wealth aspire,
 While scorn, neglect, and want combin'd
 To quench thy fire.

While wintry winds pipe loud and strong,
The high-perch'd storm-cock pours his song ;
So thy Eolian lyre was strung
 'Midst chilling times ;
Yet clearly didst thou roll along
 Thy "routh of rhymes."

And oh ! that routh of rhymes shall raise
For thee a lasting pile of praise.
Haply some wing, in these our days,
 Has loftier soar'd :
But from the heart more melting lays
 Were never pour'd.

Where Ganges rolls his yellow tide,
Where blest Columbus' waters glide !
Old Scotia's sons, spread far and wide,
 Shall oft rehearse,
With sorrow some, but all with pride,
 Thy 'witching verse.

In early spring, thy earthly bed
Shall be with many a wild flow'r spread ;
The violet there her sweets shall shed,
 In humble guise,
And there the mountain-daisy's head
 Shall duly rise.

While darkness reigns, should bigotry,
With boiling blood, and bended knee,
Scatter the weeds of infamy
 O'er thy cold clay,
Those weeds, at light's first blush, shall be
 Soon swept away.

And when thy scorners are no more,
The lonely glens, and sea-beat shore,
Where thou hast croon'd thy fancies o'er
 With soul elate,
Oft shall the bard at eve explore,
 And mourn thy fate.

SONNET TO THE SHADE OF BURNS.

BY

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

MUTE is thy wild harp now, O bard sublime !
Who, amid Scotia's mountain solitude,
Great nature taught to build the lofty rhyme,
And even beneath the daily pressure rude
Of labouring poverty, thy generous blood
Fired with the love of freedom. Not subdued
Wert thou by thy low fortune ; but a time,
Like this we live in, when the abject clime
Of echoing parasite is best approved,
Was not for thee. Indignantly is fled
Thy noble spirit ; and, no longer mov'd
By all the ills o'er which thine heart has bled,
Associate worthy of the illustrious dead,
Enjoys with them the liberty it loved.

VERSES

WRITTEN ON A BLANK LEAF OF CURRIE'S LIFE OF BURNS.

BY

T. H.—DUNFERMLINE.

I CAME, the minstrel on the hills was singing,
The happiest swain in mountain Caledon ;
For in him was a joy—fount ever springing
 Which none could poison, save himself ; and
 none
Could quench, save death ! As yet without
 alloy
It welled in rapture in the Minstrel Boy.

I came again—Ah ! he was quickly changing !
No more would he upon the manna live
Of his own heaven—but through the desert
 ranging
For raptures which his soul alone could give,
He lost the jewel of eternal joy :—
He was no more the happy Minstrel Boy.

I came again.—His heart, so free, so warm,
Was breaking in the thrall of woe intense ;
And his Æolian soul, which once could charm
 The tempest that swept o'er it into strains
Of wildest joy, was now itself unstrung,
And to the blast its chords in madness flung.

I came again—The morning beams were sleeping
Upon a grave—The gifted and the young
Lay there—the scented mountain flowers were
 weeping
Their tears of dew upon its sward, and sung
The lark a requiem o'er the silent bed
Of him—the free—the mighty soul'd—the dead !

Oh ! had the tithe of monumental offering,
Which wealth and rank have on his memory
 rolled,
Been poured upon the living, and the suffering,
E'er yet the twelfth hour of his fate had tolled,
How changed had been his tale, so bright, so
 brief !
He had not filled his grave,—nor I this leaf.

FOR THE

ANNIVERSARY OF BURNS.

BY

DAVID VEDDER, DUNDEE.

WHEN Januar winds were ravin' wi',
O'er a' the districts o' our isle ;
There was a callant born in Kyle,
 An' he was christened Robin.
Oh Robin was a dainty lad,
Rantin' Robin, rhymin' Robin ;
It made the gossips unco glad,
 To hear the cheep o' Robin.

That ne'er to be forgotten morn,
When Coila's darling son was born;
Auld Scotland on her stock an' horn,
Play'd "welcome hame" to Robin.

And Robin was the blythest loon,
Rantin' Robin, rhymin' Robin,
That ever sang beneath the moon—
We'll a' be proud o' Robin.

The Muses round his cradle hung,
The Graces wat his infant tongue,
And independence, wi' a rung,
Cried, "Red the gate for Robin."

For Robin's soul-arousing tones,
Rantin' Robin, rhymin' Robin,
Gart tyrants tremble on their thrones—
We'll a' be proud o' Robin.

Th'm le.'t devote this night to mirth,
And celebrate our poet's birth,
While Freedom preaches in the earth,
She'll tak her text frae Robin.
Oh Robin's magic notes shall ring,
Rantin' Robin, rhymin' Robin;
While rivers run, and flowrets spring,
Huzza! huzza! for Robin.

THE

POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS.

Preface to the First, or Kilmarnock, Edition.

(JULY 1786.)

THE following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and, perhaps, amid the elegancies and idleness of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these, and other celebrated names, their countrymen are, at least in their original language, *a fountain shut up, and a book sealed*. Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a rhymers from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulse of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality, of friendship, awakened his vanity so far as to make him think any thing of his worth showing: and none of the following works were composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigue of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings—the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears—in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind—these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless Bard, shrinks aghast at the thought of being branded as—an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and, because he can make shift to jingle a few doggerel Scottish rhymes together, looking

upon himself as a poet, of no small consequence, forsooth!

It is an observation of that celebrated poet, Shenstone, whose divine elegies do honour to our language, our nation, and our species, that "*Humility* has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!" If any critic catches at the word *genius*, the author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing, in the manner he has done, would be a manoeuvre below the worst character which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawns of the poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scottish poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame than for servile imitation.

To his Subscribers, the Author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the Bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the learned and the polite, who may honour him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life; but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of dulness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned, without mercy, to contempt and oblivion.

DEDICATION
TO THE
SECOND, OR EDINBURGH, EDITION.
OF
THE POEMS OF BURNS.

TO THE
NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN
OF
THE CALEDONIAN HUNT.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN:

A SCOTTISH BARD, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service—where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land; those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The Poetic Genius of my Country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the PLOUGH; and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue: I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient Metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my Songs under your honoured protection: I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours: that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this Address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours: I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious Countrymen; and to tell the world

that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country, that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated; and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the Great Fountain of Honour, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party: and may social Joy await your return! When harassed in courts or camps with the jostlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native seats; and may domestic happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honour to be,
With the sincerest gratitude and highest respect,
My Lords and Gentlemen,
Your most devoted humble Servant,
ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, }
April 4, 1787. }

POEMS.

IN Burns's own Memoranda, written in April 1784, he says:—"As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment, which are, in a manner, peculiar to myself, or some here and there such out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of WINTER, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast: but there is something even in the

"Mighty tempest, and the heavy waste,
Abrupt, and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth!"

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity favourable to everything great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me—something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.' In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following:—"

Winter.

A DIRGE.

I.

THE wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

II.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"
The joyless winter-day,

* Dr. Young. R. B.

Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

III.

Thou Pow'r Supreme, whose mighty scheme,
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
Because they are Thy will!
Then all I want (O, do thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to enjoy thou dost deny,
Assist me to resign.

[The above is, with the exception of one or two songs, the earliest of all the Poet's compositions. According to Gilbert Burns, it was a juvenile production. It is, says Lockhart, "an admirably versified piece."]

THE

DEATH AND DYING WORDS
OF

Door Mailie,

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE.

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither,
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,
Upon her clood she coost a hitch,
An' owre she wars'd in the ditch:
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoc* he cam doytin by.
Wi' glowrin' e'en an' lifted han's,
Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But, waes my heart! he could na mend it!
He gap'd wide, but naething spak—
At length poor Mailie silence brak.

"O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my master dear.

* A neighbor-herd—callan. R. B.

"Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,
O bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair !
But ca' them out to park or hill,
An' let them wander at their will ;
So may his flock increase, and grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo' !

"Tell him he was a master kin'
An' ay was guid to me and mine ;
An' now my dying charge I gie him,
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.

"O, bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butchers' knives !
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel ;
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' teats o' hay, an' rips o' corn.

"An' may they never learn the gaets
Of ither vile, wanrestfu' pets !
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal,
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail.
So may they, like their great forbears,
For monie a year come thro' the sheers :
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.

"My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir,
O, bid him breed him up wi' care !
An' if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast !
An' warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame :
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes.

"An' niest my yowie, silly thing,
Gude keep thee frae a tether string !
O, may thou ne'er forgather up
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop,
But ay keep mind to moop an' mell
Wi' sheep o' credit like thyself !

"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath
I lea'e my blessin' wi' you baith :
An' when you think upo' your mither,
Mind to be kin' to ane anither.

"Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail
To tell my master a' my tale ;
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,
An', for thy pains, thou'st get my blather."

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
And clos'd her een amang the dead.

["The circumstances of the poor sheep," says Gilbert Burns, "were pretty much as Robert has described them. He had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlea. He and I were

going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us, at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking, awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with Hughoc's appearance and postures on the occasion. Poor Mailie was set to rights, and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her 'Death and Dying Words,' pretty much in the way they now stand."

"The expiring animal's admonitions touching the education of the 'poor toop lamb, her son and heir, and the 'yowie silly thing' her daughter, are from the same peculiar vein of sly homely wit, embedded upon fancy, which he afterwards dug with a bolder hand in the 'Twa Dogs,' and perhaps to its utmost depth in his '*Death and Doctor Hornbook*.' It need scarcely be added that poor Mailie was a real personage, though she did not actually die until some time after her *last words* were written."—LOCKHART.]

Poor Mailie's Elegy.

LAMENT in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose ;
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead ;
The last sad cape-stane of his woes ;
Poor Mailie's dead !

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could saw bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear
The mourning weed :
He's lost a friend and neibor dear
In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the toun she trotted by him ;
A lang half-mile she could desery him ;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed :
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel wi' mense :
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
Her living image in her yowe
Comes bleating to him, ovre the knowe,
For bits o' bread ;
An' down the briny pearls rowe
For Mailie dead

She was nae get o' moorland tips,
 Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips;
 For her forbears were brought in ships
 Frae yont the Tweed:
 A bonnier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips
 Than Mailie dead.*

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
 That vile, wanchance thing—a rape!
 It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,
 Wi' chokin' dread;
 An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,
 For Mailie dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonnie Doon!
 An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
 Come, join the melancholious croon
 O Robin's reed!
 His heart will never get aboon
 His Mailie dead!

[“The principle of love, which is the great characteristic of Burns, often manifests itself in a thinner disguise, in the shape of humour. Every where, in his sunny mood, a full buoyant flood of mirth runs through his mind,—he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all nature. He has a bold and irresistible faculty of caricature; this is drollery rather than humour. A much tenderer sportfulness dwells in him than this, and comes forth here and there in evanescent and beautiful touches, as in his ‘Address to the Mouse,’ or ‘The Farmer’s Auld Mare,’ or in ‘*Poor Mailie*,’ which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces there is a humour as fine as that of Sterne, and yet altogether different, original, peculiar,—in one word, the humour of Burns.”—CARLISLE.]

* This stanza, says Gilbert Burns, was, at first, as follows—

She was nae get o' runted rams,
 Wi' woo' like goats, an' legs like trams;
 She was the flower o' Fairlee lambs,
 A famous breed:
 Now Robin, greetin', chows the hams
 O' Mailie dead.

The taste of Burns evidently rejected the verse, because the concluding lines did not harmonize with the prevailing sentiment of the poem. “It were a pity,” adds Gilbert, “that the ‘Fairlee Lambs’ should lose the honour once intended them.”

† [The hero of this Epistle is the well-known David Sillar, a scholar and poet. He was a native of Tarbolton, became, in 1784, a schoolmaster at Irvine, and having, in the course of a long life, realized considerable property, he was appointed one of the magistrates of that town. He published a volume of poems, in the Scottish dialect, some of which displayed considerable talent. He was an early friend of Burns, by whom he was introduced into the Tarbolton Bachelor’s Club, in May 1791. David Sillar died on the 2nd of May 1830, at the age of seventy.]

‡ Ramsay.

§ [“The old remembered beggar, even in my own time, like the baccach, or travelling cripple of Ireland, was expected to merit his quarters by something beyond an exposition of his distresses. He was often a talkative, facetious fellow, prompt at repartee, and not withheld from exercising his power that way by any respect of persons, his patched cloak giving him the privilege of the ancient jester. To be a *guid crack*, that

‘The Elegy’ is a somewhat later production than the ‘Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie.’

Epistle to Dabie.

A BROTHER POET.†

[DAVID SILLAR, SCHOOLMASTER AND BARD.]
 January, 1784.

I.

WHILE winds frae off Ben Lomond blaw,
 And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
 And hing us owre the ingle,
 I set me down to pass the time,
 And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
 In hamely westlin jingle.
 While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
 Ben to the chimla lug,
 I grudge a wee the great folks' gift,
 That live sae bien an' snug:
 I tent less, and want less
 Their roomy fire-side;
 But hanker and canker
 To see their cursed pride.

II.

It's hardly in a body's pow'r
 To keep, at times, frae being sour,
 To see how things are shar'd;
 How best o' chieils are whiles in want,
 While coofs on countless thousands rant,
 And ken na how to wair't;
 But, Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,
 Tho' we hae little gear,
 We're fit to win our daily bread,
 As lang's we're hale and fier:
 “Mair spier na, nor fear na,” ‡
 Auld age ne'er mind a feg,
 The last o't, the worst o't,
 Is only but to beg.§

is, to possess talents for conversation, was essential to the trade of a ‘puir body’ of the more esteemed class; and Burns, who delighted in the amusement their discourses afforded, seems to have looked forward with gloomy firmness to the possibility of himself becoming, one day or other, a member of their itinerant society. In his poetical works, it is alluded to so often as, perhaps, to indicate that he considered the consummation as not utterly impossible. Thus, in the fine dedication of his works to Gavin Hamilton, he says,

‘And when I downa yoke a naig,
 Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg.’

Again, in his Epistle to Davie, a brother poet, he states that, in their closing career,

‘The last o't, the worst o't,
 Is only but to beg.’

And after having remarked that

‘To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
 When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
 Is, doubtless, great distress;’

the bard reckons up, with true poetical spirit, that free enjoyment of the beauties of nature, which might counterbalance the hardship and uncertainty of the life even of a mendicant. In one of his prose letters, that to Mr. Murdoch, dated Jan. 15th, 1783, he details this idea yet more seriously, and dwells upon it as not ill adapted to his habits and powers. As the life of a Scottish mendicant of the eighteenth century seems to have been contemplated without much horror by Robert

III.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
 When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
 Is, doubtless, great distress!
 Yet then content could make us blest;
 Ev'n then, sometimes, we'd snatch a taste
 Of truest happiness.
 The honest heart that's free frae a'
 Intended fraud or guile,
 However fortune kick the ba',
 Has ay some cause to smile:
 And mind still, you'll find still,
 A comfort this nae sma';
 Nae mair then, we'll care then,
 Nae farther can we fa'.

IV.

What tho', like commoners of air,
 We wander out we know not where,
 But either house or ha' ?
 Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
 The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
 Are free alike to all.
 In days when daisies deck the ground,
 And blackbirds whistle clear,
 With honest joy our hearts will bound
 To see the coming year:
 On braes when we please, then,
 We'll sit and sowth a tune:
 Syne rhyme till 't, we'll time till 't,
 And sing 't when we hae done.

V.

It's no in titles nor in rank:
 It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
 To purchase peace and rest:
 It's no in makin' muckle mair;
 It's no in books; it's no in lear;
 To make us truly blest;
 If happiness hae not her seat
 And centre in the breast,
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,
 But never can be blest:
 Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
 Could make us happy lang:
 The heart ay's the part ay
 That makes us right or wrang.

VI.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
 Wha drudge and drive thro' wet an' dry,
 Wi' never-ceasing toil;
 Think ye, are we less blest than they
 Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
 As hardly worth their while?

Alas! how aft in haughty mood,
 God's creatures they oppress!
 Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
 They riot in excess!
 Baith careless, and fearless
 Of either heav'n or hell!
 Esteeming and deeming,
 It a' an idle tale!

VII.

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce,
 Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
 By pining at our state;
 And, even should misfortunes come,
 I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
 An's thankfu' for them yet.
 They gie the wit of age to youth;
 They let us ken oursel';
 They make us see the naked truth,
 The real guid and ill.
 Tho' losses, and crosses,
 Be lessons right severe,
 There's wit there, ye'll get there,
 Ye'll find nae other where.

VIII.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!
 (To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
 And flatt'ry I detest.)
 This life has joys for you and I;
 And joys that riches ne'er could buy:
 And joys the very best.
 There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
 The lover an' the frien';
 Ye hae your Meg,* your dearest part,
 And I my darling Jean!
 It warms me, it charms me,
 To mention but her name:
 It heats me, it beets me,
 And sets me a' on flame!

IX.

O, all ye pow'rs who rule above!
 O Thou, whose very self art love!
 Thou know'st my words sincere!
 The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
 Or my more dear immortal part,
 Is not more fondly dear!
 When heart-corroding care and grief
 Deprive my soul of rest,
 Her dear idea brings relief
 And solace to my breast.
 Thou Being, All-seeing,
 O hear my fervent pray'r!
 Still take her, and make her
 Thy most peculiar care!

Burns, the author could hardly have erred in giving to Edie Ochiltree something of poetical character and personal dignity, above the more abject of his miserable calling. The class had, in fact, some privileges. A lodging, such as it was, was readily granted to them in some of the out-houses; and the awmous (alms) of a handful of meal (called a gowpen) was scarce denied by the poorest cottager. The mendicant disposed these, according to their different quality, in various bags around his person, and thus carried about with him the principal part of his sustenance, which he literally

received for the asking. At the houses of the gentry his cheer was wended by scraps of broken meat, and perhaps a Scottish 'twalpenny,' or English penny, which was expended in snuff or whiskey. In fact, these indolent peripatetics suffered much less real hardship and want of food than the poor peasant from whom they received alms."—SIR WALTER SCOTT.]

* Sillar's flame was a lass of the name of Margaret Orr, who had charge of the children of Mrs. Stewart of Stair. It was not the fortune of "Meg" to become Mrs. Sillar.

X.

All hail ! ye tender feelings dear !
 The smile of love, the friendly tear,
 The sympathetic glow !
 Long since, this world's thorny ways
 Had number'd out my weary days,
 Had it not been for you !
 Fate still has blest me with a friend,
 In every care and ill ;
 And oft a more endearing band,
 A tie more tender still.
 It lightens, it brightens
 The tenebrious scene,
 To meet with, and greet with
 My Davie or my Jean !

XI.

O, how that name inspires my style !
 The words come skelpin, rank and file,
 Amaist before I ken !
 The ready measure rins as fine
 As Phœbus and the famous Nine
 Were glowrin owre my pen.
 My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
 'Till ance he's fairly het ;
 And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp,
 An' rin an unco fit :
 But lest then, the beast then,
 Should rue this hasty ride,
 I'll light now, and dight now
 His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

[“Among the earliest of his poems,” says Gilbert Burns, “was the Epistle to Davie. Robert often composed without any regular plan. When anything made a strong impression on his mind, so as to rouse it to any poetic exertion, he would give way to the impulse, and embody the thought in rhyme. If he hit on two or three stanzas to please him, he would then think of proper introductory, connecting, and concluding stanzas ; hence the middle of a poem was often first produced. It was, I think, in the summer of 1784, when, in the interval of harder labour, Robert and I were weeding in the garden, that he repeated to me the principal part of this Epistle. I believe the first idea of Robert's becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was much pleased with the Epistle, and said to him I was of opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste ; that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scottish poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression ; but here, there was a strain of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet : that, besides, there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging.—Robert seemed well pleased with my criticism.”]

The peculiar stanza in which this poem is written was probably introduced to Burns's notice by Allan Ramsay ; but it was employed by Scottish poets of much earlier date, particularly by Captain Alexander Montgomery, in his “Cherry and the Slae,” written in the reign of James VI.]

Burns's First Epistle to David Sillar produced the following reply from Dainty Davie :—

Epistle to Robert Burns.

I.

WHILE Reekie's Bards your muse commen',
 An' praise the numbers o' your pen,
 Accept this kinly frae a frien',
 Your Dainty Davie ;
 Wha ace o' hearts does still remain,
 Ye may believe me.

II.

I ne'er was muckle gien to praisin',
 Or else ye might be sure o' fraisin' ;
 For trouth, I think, in solid reason,
 Your kintra reed
 Plays sweet as Robin Fergusson,
 Or his on Tweed.

III.

Your Luath, Cæsar bites right sair ;
 An' when ye paint the Holy Fair,
 Ye draw it to a very hair ;
 Or when ye turn,
 An' sing the follies o' the Fair,
 How sweet ye mourn !

IV.

Let Coila's plains wi' me rejoice,
 An' praise the worthy Bard whose lays
 Their worth and beauty high doth raise
 To lasting fame ;
 His works, his worth, will ever praise
 An' crown his name.

V.

Brave Ramsay now, and Fergusson,
 Wha hae sae lang time fill'd the Throne
 O' Poetry, may now lie down
 Quiet i' their urns,
 Since Fame, in justice, gies the crown
 To Coila's Burns.

VI.

Hail ! happy Bard ! ye're now confest,
 The King o' Singers i' the west ;
 Edina hath the same exprest :
 Wi' joy their fin'
 That ye're, when tried by Nature's test,
 Guid sterling coin.

VII.

Sing on, my frien' ; your fame's secur'd,
 An' still maintain the name o' Bard ;
 But yet tak tent an' keep a guard :
 For Envy's tryin'
 To blast your fame ; mair just reward
 For the envyin'.

VIII.

But tho' the tout o' fame may please you,
 Let na the flatt'rin' ghaist o'erheeze you:
 Ne'er flyte nor fraise to gar folk roose you;
 For men o' skill,
 When ye write weel, will always praise you
 Out o' guid will.

IX.

Great numbers on this earthly ba'
 As soon as death gies them the ca',
 Permitted are to slide awa',
 An' straught forgot,—
 Forbid that this should ever fa'
 To be your lot!

X.

I ever had an anxious wish,
 Forgive me, Heav'n! if 'twas amiss,
 That fame in life my name would bless,
 An' kindly save
 It from the cruel tyrant's crush
 Beyond the grave.

XI.

Tho' the fastest liver soonest dies,
 An' length o' days sud mak ane wise:
 Yet haste wi' speed, to glory rise
 An' spur your horse;
 They're shortest ay wha gain the prize
 Upo' the course.

XII.

Sae to conclude, auld frien' an' neibor,
 Your muse forget na weel to feed her,
 Then steer thro' life wi' birr an' vigour,
 To win a horn,
 Wha's soun' shall reach ayont the Tiber
 Mang ears unborn.

Second Epistle to Davie,

A BROTHER POET.*

AULD NEIBOR,

I'm three times, doubly, o'er your debtor,
 For your auld-farrant frien'ly letter;
 Tho' I maun say't, I doubt ye flatter,
 Ye speak sae fair,
 For my puir, silly, rhymin' clatter
 Some less maun sair.

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;
 Lang may your elbuck jink and diddle,
 To cheer you thro' the weary widdle
 O' war'ly cares,
 Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle
 Your auld, grey hairs.

But DAVIE, lad, I'm rede ye're glaikit;
 I'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit;
 An' gif it's sae, ye sud be licket
 Until ye fyke;
 Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faiket,
 Be hain't wha like.

For me, I'm on Parnassus' brink,
 Rivin' the words to gar them clink;
 Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink,
 Wi' jads or masons;
 An' whyles, but aye owre late, I think
 Braw sober lessons.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
 Commen' me to the Bardie clan;
 Except it be some idle plan
 O' rhymin' clink,
 The devil-haet, that I sud ban
 They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin',
 Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin';
 But just the pouchie put the nieve in,
 An' while ought's there,
 Then, hiltie, skiltie, we gae scrievin';
 An' fash nae mair.

Leeze me on rhyme! its aye a treasure,
 My chief, amais't, my only pleasure,
 At hame, a-fiel', at wark, or leisure,
 The Muse, poor hizzie!
 Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure,
 She's seel'dom lazy.

Haud to the Muse, my dainty Davie:
 The warl' may play you mony a shavie;
 But for the Muse, she'll never leave ye,
 Tho' e'er sae puir,
 Na, even though limpin' wi' the spavie
 Frae door to door.

"David Sillar was, for some time, the chosen companion of Burns, and seems to have confided much to him in matters of love-making. The bard of Mossiel accompanied his friend on one of his visits to the family of Mrs. Stewart, of Stair, and, as some of the lassies sung well, he gave them one or two of his songs. Mrs. Stewart, happened, by chance, to see one of these compositions, and was so much struck with its grace and tenderness that she desired to be told when the Author visited Stair again. It was in this way that his acquaintance with that accomplished lady began: and many years afterwards the Poet told Miss Stewart that, when requested to walk into the drawing-room, to be introduced to her mother, he suffered more than he would like to suffer again.—"Indeed," he said, "I endured such palpitation of heart as I never after experienced among

'Lords and ladies of high degree.'"

As this introduction took place in 1784, Mrs. Stewart must be, hereafter, regarded as one of the first in Ayr-shire, above the Poet's rank in life, who perceived his genius and treated him with respect."—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

* This Epistle is prefixed to the Poems of David Sillar,

which were published in Kilmarnock, in the year 1789.

Address to the Deil.*

"O Prince! O Chief of many thron'd Pow'rs,
That led th' embattled Seraphim to war!"—
MILTON.

I.

O THOU! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim and scottie,
Closed under hatches,
Spairges† about the brunstane cootie,
To scaud poor wretches!

II.

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
An' let poor damned bodies be;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,

* This poem has been ably illustrated by Mr. Thomas Landseer, accompanied with explanatory notes, many of them excellent, and displaying much critical acumen. We subjoin some of these:—

STANZAS III. IV.—"This stanza and the following are not the only ones of the poem in which Burns has contrived to blend severe moral truths with glimpses of local scenery, and snatches of careless merriment. May we intreat the Southern reader, who has hitherto been deterred from perusing the poetry of Burns, by his provincialisms, to consider the powerful strain of true poetry which pervades this fourth stanza?"

STANZA V.—"This stanza is picturesque and full of interest. The variety of the detail is in good keeping with that garrulous minuteness which is the universal privilege of grandmothers. Would that all reverend 'grannies' were, moreover, as poetical in their relations as this lady. It is at this part of the Address that we begin to recognise the master hand with which Burns has touched the scenery of the Highlands, the moors, the lakes, and mountains. The wild and lonely places, the unearthly noises, the bewildering mists, the yet more deceptive 'wild fires dancing o'er the heath;' all of these are etchings, light, indeed, but touched with the fidelity of a keen and minute observer of nature."

STANZAS VI. VII. VIII.—"In these stanzas, he has touched, with a nice and accurate pencil, one of those foibles common to our moral nature, which require the most delicate handling. He intimates, with mingled earnestness and simplicity, that the good old woman never suspected that the noises which she heard might be that hum of insects which she thought it so much resembled, above the waters of the loch,—or the motion of a frightened bird whirling through the elder bushes. This propensity to attribute natural effects to supernatural causes is one of the best known and least intelligible phenomena of the human mind. We are always rejecting the evidence of our senses, to tamper with the imaginary evidence supplied by analogous reasoning upon mere abstract principles. The good wife never dreamed of referring her alarms to the natural objects around her. A humming drone, at twilight, by the waters, a rustling in the leaves of the trees about her cottage—if these did not bespeak the presence of the Devil, what the d—l else could they indicate?"

"Thus our poet proceeds to tell us that, beyond the same loch, he himself had a visible encounter with something, LIKE, indeed, to a bush of rushes, waving and shaking in the wind; and, after an admirable description of the emotions of fear by which he was oppressed, he incidentally mentions that the Great Unknown did, certainly, with an abrupt and hasty flight take away like a drake; but even the appropriate note of the fluttering fowl never once awakened his suspicion that it might be a fowl proper, and not the foul fiend!"

STANZA XII.—"The disruption occasioned by a thaw, and the noise of the fragments of ice sliding over one another, are happily described here. No opportunity seems more fitting for the intervention of the mischievous Kelpies, whom our northern superstitious imagine to be delighted with the last agonies of drowning men and despairing mariners, than the uproar of waters and icy masses, the tides, and the winds,

E'en to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel!

III.

Great is thy power, an' great thy fame;
Far kenn'd and noted is thy name:
An' tho' yon lowin heugh's thy hame,
Thou travels far:
An', faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur.

IV.

Whyles, ranging like a raring lion,
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin';
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin'
Tirlin the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',
Unseen thou lurks.

all in angry collision, and the raging of the elements out-roaring the delirious cries of human terror. It is not twenty years since the piercing shrieks and supplications for help, of a passage boat's company, which had been landed on a sand-bank, at low water, in the Solway Firth, instead of on the Cumberland coast, and who found, as the moon rose and the haze dispersed, that they were in mid-channel, with a strong tide setting fast in upon them, were mistaken by the people, both on the Scotch and English shores, for the wailings of Kelpies! The consequence was that the unhappy people (whose boat had drifted from them before their fatal error was discovered) were all drowned; though nothing had been easier, but for the rooted superstition of their neighbours ashore, than to have effectually succoured them."

STANZAS XV. XVI.—"In these stanzas, the transition is so startling, and yet so beautiful, that we are reminded of those early Italian poets who delighted themselves and their readers by abrupt and striking alternations from the burlesque to the pathetic; from the heroic to the humorous; and the Ayr-shire bard has the decided advantage of accomplishing the same end with less apparent effort and predilection than his gifted predecessors. It is possible to condense within the compass of four or five lines a more charming sketch of an infant world, a newly created race of beings, a state of existence serene, blissful, and contented; a condition of society unalloyed by vice or misery, want or pain? And with how much effect does the delicious repose of this picture prepare us for the fatal reverse which follows, by the introduction of the fell destroyer who, 'maist ruin'd a'!—Where the subject is felt so deeply, it is almost difficult to deprecate the tone, somewhat too light, in which the poet has chosen to treat it."

STANZA XIX.—"If the Catalogue of all the devil's doings could have been continued with equal fidelity and spirit, we might have regretted that this Address was not prolonged. But Burns formed a just estimate of the length and difficulty of such an undertaking. The reader ought to turn optimist, and acknowledge that 'all is for the best.'"

STANZA XXI.—"There is about this parting admonition a touch of human pity, which was evidently the spontaneous ebullition, perhaps the unconscious one, of a kind and sympathising nature; for precisely such a nature was Burns's. The exhortation to amendment, the suggestion of a happier fate as the result of that amendment, and the commiseration expressed for the arch-enemy of man, present, in this stanza, a moral lesson which would not have disgraced a graver preacher, a holier theme, or a more solemn occasion."

† Spairges is the best Scots word in its place I ever met with. An Englishman can have no idea of the ludicrous image it conveys. The deil does not stand flinging the liquid brimstone on his friends with a ladle, but we see him standing at a large boiling vat, with something like a golf-bat, striking the liquid this way and that way aslant, with all his might, making it fly through the whole apartment, while the inmates are winking and holding up their arms to defend their faces. This is precisely the idea conveyed by spairging; flinging it in any other way would be *laving* or *splashing*.—THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD.

V.

I've heard my reverend Grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way
Wi' eldritch croon.

VI.

When twilight did my Grannie summon,
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin',
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin, thro' the boorties comin',
Wi' heavy groan.

VII.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentint' light,
Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
Wi' waving sough.

VIII.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch, stoor quack—quack—
Among the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd, like a drake,
On whistling wings.

IX.

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd bags,
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues
Owre howkit dead.

X.

Thence countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirk in vain:
For, oh! the yellow treasure's taen
By witching skill;
An' dawtit, twal-pint hawkie's gaen
As yell's the bill.

XI.

Thence mystic knots* mak great abuse
On young guidmen, fond, keen, an' crouse;

* [The mind of the Poet was stored with the superstitions contained in the ancient songs and traditions in Scotland. The way in which witch-knots operated on the fair sex is thus described in the ballad of "Willie's ladye" in the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border:

"Synne Willy's loosed the nine witch knots
That were amang that ladye's locks;
And Willy's ta'en out the kains o' care
That were into that ladye's hair;
And he's ta'en down the bush o' woodbine
Hung atween her lover and the witch carline.
And he has kill'd the master kid
That ran beneath that ladye's bed;

When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantrip wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

XII.

When throwes dissolve the snawy noord,
An' float the jinglin icy-boord,
Then water-kelpies haunt the foord,
By your direction;
An' nighted trav'lers are allur'd
To their destruction.

XIII.

An' aft your moss-traversing spunkies
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkey
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

XIV.

When masons' mystic word an' grip
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest brother ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell!

XV.

Lang syne, in Eden's bonnie yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,
The raptur'd hour,
Sweet on the fragrant, flow'ry sward,
In shady bow'r:†

XVI.

Then you, ye auld, sneec-drawing dog!
Ye came to Paradise incog.,
An' play'd on man a curs'd brogue,
(Black be your fa'!)
An' gied the infant warld a shog,
Maist ruin'd a'.

XVII.

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,
Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz,

And he has loosed her left foot shae (shoe),
And latten that ladye lighter be;
And now he has gotten a bonny son,
And meikle grace be him upon."]

† This verse ran originally thus:—

Lang syne in Eden's happy scene,
When strappin' Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonnie Jean,
My dearest part,
A dancin', sweet, young, handsome quean,
Wi' guileless heart.

Ye did present your smcutie phiz
 'Mang better folk,
 An' sklent on the man o' Uzz
 Your spitefu' joke?

XVIII.

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
 An' brak him out o' house an' hall,
 While scabs an' botches did him gall,
 Wi' bitter claw,
 And lows'd his ill-tongu'd, wicked scawl,
 Was warst ava?

XIX.

But a' your doings to rehearse,
 Your wily snares an' fechtin' fierce,
 Sin' that day Michael* did you pierce,
 Down to this time,

* *Vide* Milton, Book vi.—R. B.
 † [The three verses from the "Poem on Life," addressed
 by the poet to "Colonel De Peyster," commencing
 ‡ "Ah, Nick! ah, Nick! it is na fair,"
 would have here made a very appropriate addition to this
 poem.]

[THE "DEIL'S ANSWER"]

TO THIS ADDRESS, BY THE POET'S FRIEND

LAPRAIK,

IS AS FOLLOWS:—

TO THE POET BURNS

WHAE'ER thou be, thou art na blate,
 Wha mocks a sp'rit o' ancient date,
 Wha't best is in a confin'd state,
 An' canna pass
 Beyond the bounds an' limits set
 By the first Cause.

You Poets, when you lift your pen,
 A' but yoursels to me you sen'
 But, by this time, thee weel I ken',
 Thou'rt my acquaintance,
 These twenty years I did thee learn
 To blether nonsense.

I own man's credit was nae sma',
 When he was new, an' tight, an' bra';
 His pow'r was great to rule o'er a'
 Things that were made;
 But soon his pride did let him fa',
 For a' that's said.

Although I am a creature made,
 No pow'r o'er me old Adam had,
 Then why should'st thou wi' names upbraid,
 An' so ill use me,
 Wha now am chain'd by God's strong hand,
 An' can't abuse thee?

Thou ca'st me Hornie, Nick, an' Cloutie,
 An' tells my cave is grim an' sootie;
 But stop, thou'lt, may-be, be my booty;
 I'll try my skill;
 I'll gang as far as Fate will let me,
 An' wi' guid will.

I'll thee entice baith day an' night;
 O' me thou need be in nae fright;
 As Deil I'll ne'er come in thy sight;
 Thou'lt still embrace
 My motions, which will yield delight,
 When done wi' grace.

I know thou hast a wanton turn,
 Wi' passions stout as e'er were born;

Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse,
 In prose or rhyme. †

XX.

An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin',
 A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
 Some luckless hour will send him linkin'
 To your black pit;
 But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin',
 An' cheat you yet.

XXI.

But, fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
 O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
 Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
 Still hae a stake—
 I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
 Ev'n for your sake! ‡

Thou lik'st the maid wi' hainches roun'
 An' waist genteel,
 Wi' e'en jet black, an' hair nut brown,
 Thy heart she'll steal.

Wha walks sae neat, throws out her toes,
 An' minches as she past thee goes:
 By such thou'rt hook'd by the nose
 For a' thy skill;
 Thou'lt ne'er me blame, I'm sae abstruse
 Thou'lt take thy will.

Thou tells, thou ance was fear'd thyself,
 Nae wonder; for 'tis guilt mak's hell;
 Thy conscience cluck'd, wi' sic a knell,
 Did mak' thee shake,
 For naething mair than sugh o' quill
 O duck or drake.

Thou tells, by times I travel far,
 An' that I'm neither blate nor secur—
 Mock not! let never guid frien's jar
 Wi' aye anither,
 Thou'rt my full mark, baith keel an' tar,
 If not a brither.

Pray R—b, the rhymers, just nae mair,
 An' o' your titles tak' a care;
 Or else ye ken how ye shall fare,
 For a' your cracks,
 An' muckle-thought-o' rhyming ware
 An' catcling snacks.

An' if your mocks I more shall hear,
 I, by my cavern deep, do swear,
 Upon your vengeance I will rear;
 Thou shalt lament
 What thou hast publish'd, far an' near,
 Me to affront.

With irony thou spak'st wi' glee,
 Which shows thy disrespect to me,
 Bids me repent, an' then may-be,
 I'll hae a stake;
 I thank thee for thy wae-like e'e
 For fashion's sake.

For o' my hopes I canna boast;
 For sure an' certain I am lost;
 The sure decree 'gainst me is past,
 An' canna alter
 May-be thou'lt ken't, unto thy cost,
 If I thee halter.

Thy chance is little mair than mine;
 Thou mock'st at every thing divine;
 Thy rhetoric has made thee shine,
 To please the wicked;
 But ere thou round the corner twine,
 I'll hae thee nicked.]

"It was, I think, in the winter of 1784, as we were going with carts for coals to the family fire (and I could yet point out the particular spot), that Robert first repeated to me the 'Address to the Deil.' The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage."—GILBERT BURNS.

"The Address to the Deil is one of the happiest of the Poet's productions. Humour and tenderness are so happily intermixed that it is impossible to say which preponderates."—CURRIE.

The Prince and Power of the air is a favourite topic of rustic speculation. An old shepherd told me he had, when a boy, as good as seen him.—"I was," said he, "returning from school, and stopped till the twilight, groping trouts in a burn, when a thunder-storm came on. I looked up, and just before me a cloud came down as dark as night—the queerest-shaped cloud I ever saw; and there was something terrible about it, for when it was close to me, I saw, as plain as I see you, a dark form within it, thrice the size of any earthly man. It was the Evil One himself—there's nae doubt o' that."—"Samuel," I said, "did you hear his cloven-foot on the ground?"—"No," replied he, "but I saw ane o' his horns—and O, what waves o' fire were rowing after him!" The Devil frequently makes his appearance in our old mysteries, but he comes to work unmitigated mischief, and we part with him gladly. The "Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie," who lives in the imaginations of the peasantry, is not quite such a reprobate, though his shape is anything but prepossessing. Nor is he an object of much alarm; a knowledge of the scriptures and a belief in heaven are considered sure protectors; and a peasant will brave a suspicious road at midnight if he can repeat a psalm.—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

"Burns even pities the very deil, without knowing, I am sure, that my uncle Toby had been beforehand there with him! 'He is the father of curses and lies,' said Dr. Slop, 'and is cursed and damned already.' 'I am sorry for it,' said my uncle Toby. A Poet without love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility."—CARLISLE.

THE AULD FARMER'S
NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS

Auld Mare Maggie,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIP OF CORN TO
HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR.

A GUID New-year I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie:
Tho' thou's howe-backit, now, an' knaggie,
I've seen the day,
Thou could hae gaen like onie staggie
Out-owre the lay.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, an' crazy,
An' thy auld hide's as white's a daisy,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek, and glaizie

A bonny grey:

He should been tight that daur't to raize thee,
Ane in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, steeve, an' swank,
An' set weel down a shapely shank,
As e'er tread yird;
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank,
Like ony bird.

It's now some nine-an'-twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guid-father's meere:
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,
An' fifty mark;
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
An' thou was stark.

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
Ye then was trottin' wi' your minnie:
Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie;
But hamely, tawie, quiet, an' cannie,
An' unco sonsie.

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonnie bride:
An' sweet and gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle Stewart I could hae bragged wide,
For sic a pair.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hoble,
An' wintle like a saumont-coble,
That day ye was a jinker noble,
For heels an' win'!
An' ran them till they a' did wauble,
Far, far, behin'!

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh,
An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh,
An' tak the road!
Town's bodies ran, an' stood abeigh,
An' ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,
We took the road ay like a swallow:
At Brooses thou had ne'er a fellow,
For pith an' speed;
But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,
Where'er thou gaed.

The sma' droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle,
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;
But sax Scotch miles thou try't their mettles,
An' gar't them whaizle:
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazle.

Thou was a noble fittie-lan',
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun,
In guid March-weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither.

Thou never brandg't, and fecht, an' fliskit,
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,
Wi' pith and pow'r,
'Till spritty knowes wad rair't and risket,
An' slypet owre.

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,
I gied thy cog a wee-bit heap
Aboon the timmer;
I kenn'd my Maggie wad na sleep
For that, or simmer.

In cart or car thou never reestit;
The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it;
Thou never lap, and stent', and breastit,
Then stood to blaw;
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa.

My pleugh is now thy bairn-time a';
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;
Forbye sax mae, I've sell't awa,
That thou hast nurst:
They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,
The vera warst.

Monie a sair daurk we twa hae wrought,
An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
An' monie an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld, trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin',
An' thy auld days may end in starvin',
For my last fou,
A heapit stimpert, I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither;
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether,
To some hain'd rig,
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue.

"It was the token of a true knight in chivalry to be kind to his charger: the Kyle farmer shares in the same feeling, for he is gentle, both in word and deed, to his 'Auld Mare.' He recollects when she bore him triumphantly home when mellow, from markets and other meetings: how she ploughed the stiffest land and faced the steepest brae, and moreover brought home his bonnie bride—

'An' sweet and gracefu' she did ride,
Wi maiden air!
Kyle-Stewart I could hae bragged wide,
For sic a pair.'"

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

"Burns must have been an exceedingly good and kind-hearted being; for whenever he has occasion to address or mention any subordinate being, however mean, even a mouse or a flower, then there is a gentle pathos in his language that awakens the finest feelings of the heart."—THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD.]

To a Haggis.*

FAIR fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm.
Weel are ye wordy of a grace
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need,
While thro' your pores the dew's distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic labour dight,
An' cut you up wi' ready slight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright
Like onie ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin', rich!

Then horn for horn they stretch an' strive,
Deil tak the hindmost, on thy drive,
'Till all their weel-swallow'd kytes belyve
Are bent like drums;
Then auld guid man, maist like to rive,
Bethankit hums.

* The haggis is a dish peculiar to Scotland, though supposed to be of French extraction. It is composed of minced fat of mutton, mixed with oat-meal and suet, and boiled in a sheep's stomach. When made in *Etopa's* way, with "a curn o' spice" (see the *Gentle Shepherd*) it is an agreeable, albeit a somewhat heavy, dish, always providing that no horror be felt at the idea of its preparation. The *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, 1829, makes the following statement:—"About sixteen years ago, there resided at Mauchline a Mr. Robert Morrison, cabinet-maker. He was a great

crony of Burns, and it was in Mr. Morrison's house that the poet usually spent the 'mids o' the day' on Sunday. It was in this house that he wrote his celebrated *Address to a Haggis*, after partaking liberally of that dish, as prepared by Mrs. Morrison." The Ettrick Shepherd has, on the contrary, averred that the poem was written in the house of Mr. Andrew Bruce, Castle Hill, Edinburgh, after in like manner partaking of the dish. It was first published in the *Scots Magazine* for January 1787.—ROBERT CHAMBERS.]

Is there that o'er his French ragout,
Or olio that wad staw a sow,
Or fricassee wad mak' her spew
Wi' perfect sconner,
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view
On sic a dinner?

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash,
His spindle shank a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit;
Thro' bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!

But mark the rustic, haggis-fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walle nieve a blade,
He'll mak it whistle;
An' legs, an' arms, an' heads wi' sned,
Like taps o' thrissle.

Ye pow'rs wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her gratefu' pray'r,
Gie her a Haggis!*

[The joyous nationality of this poem is but part of its merit. The "Haggis" forms one of the most savoury morsels in Scottish cookery. Burns, it is said, once uttered something like this poem in prose, when called on to say grace where a Haggis was on the board, and the applause which he obtained induced him to work it into verse. I heard, when a boy, the Address to the Haggis recited in a boon of reapers: an old highland bandsman listened with great attention; when these lines were repeated,—

"Clap in his walle nieve a blade
He'll mak it whistle,"

he could no longer contain himself, but cried out, "Its the God's truth! To make a steel blade whistle requires a man! There was Donald Bane, when sixty-six years old, and no sae souple as he had been, was called on to fight for the honour o' the broad sword, with a foreign braggart. 'Donald—said his chief—d'ye think y're yauld enough for him?' with that he whipt out his claymore—a broad bright bit o' steel it was—and made it whistle in the air like a hunting hawk; weel! away he gaed up the Lawn-market to the strife, and ye'll na hinder some ane frae saying 'Ah Donald's failed; I doubt he'll no do!' When Donald heard this, I wish ye had seen but his e'e—it glented fire—he lap right up into the air, and seizing a lamp-iron far aboon other men's reach, hung by ae hand for a moment, sprang proudly down, and cried, 'She'll do yet!'"

* Another version of the last stanza reads thus:—

Ye Powers wha gie us a' that's gude,
Still bless auld Caledonia's broad
Wi' great John Barleycorn's heart's blude,

The component parts of a Haggis are sometimes inquired anxiously into by men who love the pleasures of the table.—"Pray, sir," said a man of the south, "why do you boil it in a sheep's bag; and, above all, what is it made of?"—"Sir," answered a man of the north, "we boil it in a sheep's bag because such was the primitive way: it was invented, sir, before linen was thought of: and as for what it is made of, I dare not trust myself with telling—I can never name all the savoury items without tears; and surely you would not wish me to expose myself in a public company?" A Haggis, in the witty and whimsical "Noctes Ambrosianae" of Blackwood, bursts when cut up over plate and table, floods the apartment, to the horror of the Ettrick Shepherd, and the astonishment of Christopher North.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.]

It is recorded by Galt in his "Autobiography," that he sat next to the Duke of York at an anniversary dinner in honour of the Poet, when his Royal Highness was attracted by the savoury steam proceeding from a Scotch Haggis. It was evidently ill made; the bag was dingy,—altogether an ugly, flabby, desultory, trencherful of fat things. "Pray what dish is that?" inquired the Duke. "A boiled pair of bagpipes!" gravely replied Galt, who dearly relished a joke, in his own quiet humorous way. The dish was immediately ordered to be removed.—C.

A Winter Night.†

"Poor naked wretches, whoso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of the pitiless storm!
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness defend you,
From seasons such as these?"

SHAKESPEARE

WHEN biting Boreas, fell and dour,
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;
When Phœbus gies a short-liv'd glow'r
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark'ning through the flaky show'r,
Or whirling drift:
Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
Poor labour sweet in sleep was locked,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-choked,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or thro' the mining outlet bocked,
Down headlong hurl.
List'ning, the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
Beneath a scour.

In stoups or luggies,
And on our board, that king of food,
A glorious Haggis!

[† First printed in the Second, or Edinburgh, Edition, 1787.]

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

Ev'n you on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exil'd,
The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd,
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now Phoebe, in her midnight reign,
Dark muff'd, view'd the dreary plain;
Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain,
Slow, solema, stole:—

"Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage, as now united, shows
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
Vengeful malice unrepenting, bestows.
Than heav'n-illum'd man on brother man
See stern oppression's iron grip,
Or mad ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, want, and murder o'er a land!
Ev'n in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pamper'd luxury, flatt'ry by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glitt'ring show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance unrefin'd,
Plac'd for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below.
Where, where is love's fond, tender thro',
With lordly honour's lofty brow,
The pow'rs you proudly own?
Is there, beneath love's noble name,
Can harbour, dark the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone!
Mark maiden-innocence a prey
To love-pretending snares,
This boasted honour turns away,
Shunning soft pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears and unavailing pray'rs!
Perhaps, this hour, in mis'ry's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking
blast!

Oh ye! who sunk, in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfied keen nature's clam'rous call,

Stretch'd on his straw he lays himself to
sleep,
While thro' the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill o'er his slumbers piles the drift'ry heap!
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where guilt and poor misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view!
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch, already crushed low
By cruel fortune's undeserved blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress,
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!"

I heard nae mair, for chanticleer
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hail'd the morning with a cheer—
A cottage-rousing crow.

But deep this truth impress'd my mind—
Through all his works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God.

"The beginning of this poem gives a capital description of the rising of a storm. Then again appears the kind feeling heart for suffering humanity."—THE ETRICK SHEPHERD.

"Neither the subjects of his poems, nor his manner of handling them, allow us long to forget their author. On the basis of his human character he has reared a poetic one, which, with more or less distinctness, presents itself to view in almost every part of his earlier, and, in my estimation, his most valuable, verses. This poetic fabric, dug out of the quarry of genuine humanity, is airy and spiritual; and though the materials in some parts are coarse, and the disposition is often fantastic and irregular, yet the whole is agreeable and strikingly attractive."—WORDSWORTH.

"The voice which the Poet hears, amid the winter storm, utters sentiments in unison with those which the Poet claims as his own in the introduction. He prepares us for sympathising in the sufferings of the human race, by the description of the rivulets choked with snow; the cattle crowding to the shelter of some precipitous bank, and the birds, which cheered him with their songs in summer, sitting chattering among the leafless trees."—CUNNINGHAM.

"How touching is it, amid the glooms of personal misery that broods over and around him; yet, amid the storm, he thinks of 'the cattle, the silly sheep, and the wee harmless burdies!' yes, the tenant of the mean lowly hut has the heart to pity all these. This is worth a whole volume of homilies on mercy; for it is the voice of mercy itself. Burns lives in sympathy: his soul rushes forth into all the realms of being: nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him."—CARLISLE.

The Jolly Beggars.

A CANTATA.

RECITATIVO.

WHEN lyart leaves bestrew the yird,
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,*
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;

* The old Scottish name for the bat.

† (Poosie Nansie's, "The scene of the 'Jolly Beggars,' was a public house in Mauchline of the lowest possible description, to which beggars and vagrants resorted for lodging and food." It was adapted for the entertainment of such characters only, and no other sort of persons ever entered it, excepting, perhaps, such wags as Burns himself, when bent upon amusement, and desirous of seeing the lowest scenes which human nature can exhibit.

"As the approach of night calls home all the creatures of animated nature to rest and enjoyment, so, in these good old times, did Saturday night, the sun-set of the week, bring to roost all the stray sons of poverty, bent upon compensating, by the festivity of one night, the contumelies, the wanderings, the hunger, cold, pain, and abstinence, of the rest. On that evening, therefore, whole fleets of mendicants might be seen thronging the roads, bound for Poosie Nansie's, to 'haud the splore,' and pouring in at all the 'town-ends' in Mauchline. Her oval-shaped door received them within its crater, as the bung-hole in the genie's cask, in the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, received the vapour into which the fisherman had caused him to dissolve himself. Then would there be recognitions of acquaintance, and the most ceremonious shaking of hands imaginable; for they were always ceremonious, till such time as the ice of politeness was thawed by the genial warmth of a few preliminary drinks; when, of course, there was a greater community of friendly feeling throughout. But not more wonders in the dissolution of ceremony did Poosie's Kilbagie achieve, than did her large pulpit-looking fire, round which they gathered, in respect of relaxing with equally potent heat the cripple limbs of the company. The miserable wretch who perished with the rheumatism, and walked double through the week, was cured in an instant, as if the demon of the disease had fled from his bones on coming within the influence of a spell. The 'Po-or-ould bli-d man,' who had howled forth the terrible circumstances of his condition, vexing the ears of the lieges, for six long days, suddenly opened his eyes to the blessings before him, as if he had only awoke from a long sleep. The 'poor sailor lad,' too, who had lost an arm with Rodney, on the glorious 12th of August, 1782, seemed suddenly to forget all the effects of the engagement, and, in the twinkling of a handspike, the long deceased limb sprang from the jacket, into all its pristine health and vigour. More astonishing resurrections than even that took place. Limbs accustomed to 'limp wi' the spavie,' recovered their vigour and proportion. Legs grew down from trunks formerly de-truncated, and arms sprang from shoulders erst apparently stumps. Immense blotches that, in week days, excited the commiseration of the charitable, in the character of plague spots upon the skin, at once disappeared, 'and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, left not a wreck behind.' The man 'with a brown leg and blue one,' who had 'had the black scurvy in Jamaica, and come home a poor helpless object,' became in a moment the soundest and liveliest man in the company; and the wretch who trembled through the week between two crutches, as if every part of his body were taking leave of the other, now shivering with the ague, and at other times agonized by the cramp, threw by his wooden friends and was 'himself again.' In short, the transformations and cures accomplished at Poosie Nansie's fire-side were miraculous and manifold. Suffice it to say that the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke, (nay, 'ranted and sang,') the lame walked—and all drunk. In the latter department, there was not a single inefficient member.

"No sooner were the window-shutters of night all fairly closed in, and every thing snug, than the festivities of the evening commenced. Tea was paraded by the females of the company, and drunk from *tuggies, cups, and tinnies*, all of them vessels not easily broken. Fowls and pieces of meat were sometimes produced from secret wallets, and bacon ham was no unusual dish; all of which were hastily prepared

When hailstones drive wi' bitter skyte,
And infant frosts begin to bite,
In hoary cranreuch drest;
Ae night at e'en a merry core
O' randie, gangrel bodies,
In Poosie Nansie's† held the splore,
To drink their orra duddies:
Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted and they sang;

by frying—for they had no delicacy of taste in cooking. To these were added savoury messes, consisting of cold meat, eggs, hares, and other articles of food the most incongruous in association, seasoned highly with salt, pepper, onions, and occasionally garlic. As soon as the feast was pretty well over—for it never could be said to be altogether done—the fiercer debaucheries began, and the hostess was in perpetual demand for supplies of more liquor. Nansie did not retail spirits herself, but procured what was wanted from a neighbouring shop, where she was allowed a small emolument for her custom, which she contrived to increase not a little by cheating her guests of an enormous commission (in kind) for her trouble. Kilbagie was then sold so low as one penny per gill; of course it was quite possible to get completely intoxicated for four pence. Over this stuff they were wont to carouse till midnight, when the 'mirth and fun' generally grew so 'fast and furious' that nothing could contain them, and their joy could only find vent in the confusion of a dance or a squabble. If the former amicable method chanced to be adopted, the floor was cleared in an instant for action. The whole of Nansie's furniture was promiscuously huddled into a corner, and to it they set, men, women, and children, like a parcel of infuriated Bacchanals, tossing their limbs wildly about, and using gesticulations, and setting into attitudes that no language can paint. After tiring of this exercise, they would again sit down to deep debauch, and drink till morning light, about which time all that had survived the soporific effects of the liquor were commonly engaged in a Polynachia, or battle general; which exertion was for the most part quite as effectual in laying the company low as the Kilbagie. They seemed to fight themselves out, in short; and one by one dropped from the scene, till not a combatant was left. All were on the floor, dead, flat, and peaceable. Sunday morning, which, rising in Scotland, finds all nature reduced to a state of perfect calm, usually found the inmates of Poosie Nansie in the same circumstances. All was quiet; but it was the quiet of desolation. The whole apartment seemed strewn with the ruins of the human race, a heterogeneous chaos of carcases, heads, arms, women, children, wooden legs, and other fragments of humanity, together with the no less disabled pieces of Nansie's furniture, that were in every respect analogous to the strange beings who used them on the preceding evening.

"Through the course of Sunday, it was observed that the inmates of Nansie's mansion were wonderfully quiet and orderly. If the weather was good, many put off the day by sitting upon turf seats at the door, smoking and talking; while the children lay half naked upon the green, amusing themselves with every species of feat and play, like Nereids sporting on the azure wave. In proportion as the debauch or battle of the preceding evening had been fierce and fatal, the conversations of Sunday were harmonious, and the harmony universal. Whatever were the injuries received in the fray, none of them were remembered. It seemed to be then the general wish that an amnesty should be agreed upon, and no revenge taken for former aggressions. At the close of night, however, the splore was again commenced with considerable briskness. But the festivities of this evening never reached within many degrees of their Saturday night jollifications, in intenseness of enjoyment or obstreperousness of mirth, partly for the sake of decorum, partly on account of low finances, and principally because their spirits, which, suppressed through the week, burst out into the most violent expressions upon Saturday-night, were so far exhausted by the first overflow that little material remained to be expended upon the second. On Monday morning, it was a rich sight to see the crapulous wretches take their departure from Mauchline, with empty wallets, sore heads, and sneaking aspects—so completely spent in every respect by the excesses they had committed, that their wretched appearance looked a thousand times more wretched; and what had formerly seemed only ruins of humanity was now the wreck of ruins."—CHAMBERS.

Wi' jumping and thumping,
The vera girdle rang.

First, neist the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,
And knapsack a' in order;

His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm—
She blinket on her sodger:

An' ay he gied the tozie drab
The tither skelpin' kiss,

While she held up her greedy gab
Just like an aumos dish.*

Ilk smack still, did crack still,
Just like a cadger's whup,
Then staggering and swagging
He roar'd this ditty up—

AIR.

Tune—*Soldier's Joy*.

I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a
trench, [the drum.
When welcoming the French at the sound of
Lal de daudle, &c.

* "Burns here likens a lady's mouth, rather irreverently, to an 'aumous dish,' and, perhaps, few readers of the poems of that immortal bard are aware of what he means by the expression. The 'aumous dish,' or 'beggar's dish,' as it was more frequently called, was a wooden vessel, half platter, half bowl, with which every mendicant was formerly provided, as a regular and proper part of his professional accoutrements. The aumos dish was a piece of furniture attached to the profession from a very early period. In the time of our Queen Mary, when the Protestants of the Netherlands first began to resist the tyranny of Philip II., the Count De Berlaumont contemptuously told the Princess of Parma that she had nothing to fear from such a race of beggars—using the French word *gueux*. The Protestants seized upon, and rejoiced in, the title—*Les Gueux*! At a great dinner, held for the purpose of expressing their sentiments, the Marquis of Utrecht, who acted as president, descended from the chair, and, re-appearing with a beggar's wallet upon his back, and a beggar's wooden cup in his hand, drank the general health in that vessel, which was immediately passed round the company, all of whom did the same. When these patriots, afterwards, by a strange enthusiasm, assumed the garb of beggars, the wooden dish was part of the *properties*—to use the theatrical phrase—with which they supported the character. The vessel, which thus flourished in the sixteenth century, was generally used by the Scottish mendicants and tinkers till near the close of the eighteenth, when the old honest system of mendicancy itself came to a close. The following curious account of it is from the pen of a Peebles-shire shepherd, who is old enough to remember its general use.

"The Beggar's dish was used by two sets of persons—the itinerant and professed beggars, and the wandering tribes of gypsies. There was no difference in the shape and size of either; but the latter class had theirs often clasped with strong hooks here and there, or perhaps bound round the middle with a neat yellow hoop. As far as I can recollect, it varied in size from a pint and a-half to two Scots pints of measure; but in my father's house at Enrick hall, I remember one that would have holden, I think, between three and four pints, and it generally went by the appellation of 'the beggar's dish.' I never saw any other plates of their shape or form; they increased gradually in width from the bottom to the middle, and for about two inches more contracted hastily towards the brim, the edge of which was turned very thin, so thin that they very often had rents in several places of their upper edge, and these cracks the tinkers held together with clear or yellow tin, or wire hoops, as noticed above. The beggar's dish was used for two purposes, to receive their aumos, and to carry brot, milk, porridge, &c., out to the road side, where the men and beggars' children staid till the

My 'prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd
his last, [Abram; †
When the bloody die was cast on the heights of
I serv'd out my trade when the gallant game
was play'd, [drum.
And the Moro' low was laid at the sound of the
Lal de daudle, &c.

I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating
batt'ries, §
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot || to
head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

And now tho' I must beg with a wooden arm
and leg,
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle, and
my callet,
As when I us'd in scarlet to follow a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

What tho' with hoary locks, I must stand the
winter shocks, [home,
Beneath the woods and rocks oftentimes for a

return of the wives from the farm-house, with what beverage they could collect either by entreaty or pilfering; and for carrying victuals the beggar's dish was well adapted, for, by its contracting so near the brim, it prevented from spilling what the good housewife had poured into it, and also kept the food warm and comfortable till it reached the principal horde: this case, however, was only applicable to the tinkers. The professional beggar presented himself and his wants all at once. I think I see him, as I have often done, leaning over a long pike staff, as it was called, and saying 'Gudewife, I maun hae my aumos.' 'What d'ye take?' was then asked. In a hoarse, slow tone, it was then answered, 'Meal, or ony thing ye like.' The meal *rusky* was then sought, when the beggar from below his left arm drew out his beggar dish—held it out, and into it the gudewife put some handfuls of meal; but the quantity was adjusted as the beggar stood high or low in the gudewife's esteem—as he was of good or bad report—as he was known or was a stranger in the place—or as he was known to have much or little need. He then poured it into a small sack, or meal pock, as it was called, which was slung over his right shoulder, and hung on his left side, below his left arm, and in above it thrust his dish, unless the gudewife gave him also *kale* or milk; this was also poured into his dish; then if there were many servants, &c., in the house at the time, the beggar generally went to the door, or went out where he could get a seat till he had eaten up his aumos; when this was done, and his pocks all equally balanced about him, he returned to the kitchen, thanked the gudewife for her kindness, wished all the family well, with peace and plenty among them; then leaning on a long white sturdy kent, well shod with iron, on the foot, and which grated among the stones aye as he set it down, slowly retired from the hospitable door."—CHAMBERS.

† The battle field in front of Quebec, where General Wolfe fell in the arms of victory, 1759.

‡ [The capture of Havannah, the capital of the Island of Cuba, by the British, in 1762, is the event here alluded to. The Moro, a strong castle defending the place, having been gallantly taken by storm, the city and island surrendered. Fourteen sail of the line, and four frigates were taken or destroyed; and an immense booty, amounting to three millions sterling, fell into the captors' hands.]

§ [The destruction of the Spanish floating batteries, during the famous siege of Gibraltar, 1782, on which occasion the gallant Captain Curtis rendered the most signal service.]

|| George Augustus Elliot, created Lord Heathfield, for his memorable defence of Gibraltar, during a siege of three years. He died in 1790.

When the tother bag I sell, and the tother
bottle tell, [drum.
I could meet a troop of hell at the sound of a
Lal de daddle, &c.

RECITATIVO.

He ended; and the kebars sheuk
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons backward leuk,
And seek the benmost bore;

A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,
He skir'd out Encore!
But up arose the martial chuck,
And laid the loud uproar.

AIR.

Tune—*Soldier Laddie*.

I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men;
Some one of a troop of dragons was my daddie,
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de la, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de la, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church;
He ventur'd the soul, and I risk'd the body,
'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de la, &c.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de la, &c.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair;
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de la, &c.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup or a song; [steady,
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de la, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Poor Merry Andrew in the neuk,
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler hizzie;
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
Between themselves they were sae busy:
At length wi' drink and courting dizzy,
He stoiter'd up an' made a face;
Then turn'd, an' laid a smack on Grizzie,
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

AIR.

Tune.—*Auld Sir Symon*.

Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou,
Sir Knave is a fool in a session;
He's there but a 'prentice I trow,
But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she bought me a beuk,
And I held awa to the school;
I fear I my talent misteuk,
But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neek,
A hizzie's the half o' my craft,
But what could ye other expect,
Of ane that's avowedly daft?

I ance was ty'd up like a stirk,
For civilly swearing and quaffing;
I ance was abus'd in the kirk,
For touzling a lass i' my daffin.

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,
Let naebody name wi' a jeer:
There's ev'n, I'm tauld, i' the Court
A Tumbler ca'd the Premier.

Observ'd ye yon reverend lad
Mak' faces to tickle the mob?
He rails at our mountebank squad—
It's rivalry just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I'll tell,
For faith I'm confoundedly dry;
The chiel that's a fool for himsel',
Gude L—d! he's far dafter than I.

RECITATIVO.

Then neist outspak a raucle carlin,
Wha ken't, fu' weel to cleek the sterling,
For monie a pursie she had bookit,
And had in monie a well been doukit.
Her dove had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefer' woodie!
Wi' sighs and sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

AIR.

Tune—*O an ye were dead, gudeman*.

A Highland lad my love was born,
The Lalland laws he held in scorn;
But he still was faithfu' to his clan.
My gallant braw John Highlandman.

CHORUS.

Sing, hey my braw John Highlandman!
Sing, ho my braw John Highlandman!
There's not a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid,
An' guid claymore down by his side,
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c

We ranged a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' liv'd like lords and ladies gay ;
For a Lalland face he feared nane,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But, ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

But, oh ! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast ;
My curse upon them every one,
They've hang'd my braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return ;
Nae comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

RECITATIVO.

A pigmy scraper, wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trysts and fairs to driddle,
Her strappan limb and gaucy middle,
(He reach'd nae higher,)
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
An' blawn't on fire.

Wi' hand on haunch, an' upward e'e,
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,
Then in an Arioso key,
The wee Apollo,

Set off wi' Allegretto glee
His giga solo.
AIR.

Tune.—*Whistle o'er the lave o't.*

Let me ryke up to dight that tear,
And go wi' me and be my dear,
And then your ev'ry care and fear
May whistle ower the lave o't.

CHORUS.

I am a fiddler to my trade,
And a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,
The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirms and weddings we'se be there,
And O ! sae nicely 's we will fare ;
We'll bouse about till Daddie Care
Sings whistle owre the lave o't.

I am, &c.

Fae merrily the banes we'll pyke,
And sun oursels about the dyke,
And at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle owre the lave o't.

I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms,
And while I kittle hair on thairms,
Hungor, cauld, and a' sic harms,
May whistle owre the lave o't.

I am, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
As weel as poor gut-scraper ;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
And draws a roosty rapier—

He swoor by a' was swearing worth,
To speet him like a pliver,
Unless he wad from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor tweedle-dee
Upon his hunkers bended,
And pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
And sae the quarrel ended.

But tho' his little heart did grieve
When round the tinkler press'd her,
He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve,
When thus the caird address'd her :

AIR.

Tune.—*Clout the caudron.*

My bonny lass, I work in brass,
A tinkler is my station :
I've travell'd round all Christian ground,
In this my occupation.
I've ta'en the gold, I've been enroll'd
In many a noble squadron :
But vain they search'd, when off I march'd
To go and clout the caudron.
I've ta'en the gold, &c.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
Wi' a' his noise and cap'rin',
And tak' a share wi' those that bear
The budget and the apron.
And by that stoup, my faith and houp,
An' by that dear Kilbagie,*
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
May I ne'er weet my craigie.
An' by that stoup, &c.

RECITATIVO.

The caird prevail'd—th' unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk,
Partly wi' love, o'ercome sae sair,
An' partly she was drunk.
Sir Violino, with an air
That show'd a man of spunk,
Wish'd unison between the pair,
An' made the bottle clunk
To their health that night.

But urchin Cupid shot a shaft,
That play'd a dame a shavie,
The fiddler rak'd her fore and aft,
Behint the chicken cavie.

* [A peculiar sort of whiskey, so called from Kilbagie distillery in Clackmannanshire. It was a great favourite with Poozie Nannie's Clubs.]

Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,*
 Tho' limping wi' the spavie,
 He hirp'd up, and lap like daft,
 And shor'd them Dainty Davie
 O' boot that night.

He was a care-defying blade
 As ever Bacchus listed,
 Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid,
 His heart she ever miss'd it.
 He had nae wish but—to be glad,
 Nor want but—when he thirsted;
 He hated nought but—to be sad,
 And thus the muse suggested
 His sang that night.

AIR.

Tune.—*For a' that, an' a' that.*

I am a bard of no regard,
 Wi' gentle folks, an' a' that;
 But Homer-like, the glowran byke,
 Frae town to town I draw that.

CHORUS.

For a' that, an' a' that,
 An' twice as muckle's a' that;
 I've lost but ane, I've twa behin',
 I've wife enough for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank,
 Castalia's burn, an' a' that;
 But there it streams, and richly reams,
 My Helicon I ca' that.

For a' that, &c.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
 Their humble slave, an' a' that;
 But lordly will, I hold it still
 A mortal sin to throw that.

For a' that, &c.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
 Wi' mutual love, an' a' that;
 But for how lang the flee may stang,
 Let inclination law that.

For a' that.

Their tricks and craft hae put me daft,
 They've ta'en me in, an' a' that;
 But clear your decks, and here's the sex!
 I like the jads for a' that.

CHORUS.

For a' that, an' a' that,
 An' twice as muckle's a' that;
 My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
 They're welcome till't for a' that.

RECITATIVO.

So sang the bard—and Nansie's wa's
 Shook wi' a thunder of applause,
 Re-echo'd from each mouth;

They toom'd their pocks, an' pawn'd their duds,
 They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
 To quench their lowan drouth.
 Then owre again, the jovial thrang,
 The poet did request,
 To loose his pack an' wale a sang,
 A ballad o' the best;
 He, rising, rejoicing,
 Between his twa Deborahs,
 Looks round him, an' found them
 Impatient for the chorus

AIR.

Tune.—*Jolly Mortals, fill your Glasses.*

See! the smoking bowl before us,
 Mark our jovial ragged ring!
 Round and round take up the chorus,
 And in raptures let us sing.

CHORUS.

A fig for those by law protected!
 Liberty's a glorious feast!
 Courts for cowards were erected,
 Churches built to please the priest.

What is title? what is treasure?
 What is reputation's care?
 If we lead a life of pleasure,
 'Tis no matter how or where!
 A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
 Round we wander all the day;
 And at night, in barn or stable,
 Hug our doxies on the hay.
 A fig, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
 Thro' the country lighter rove?
 Does the sober bed of marriage
 Witness brighter scenes of love?
 A fig, &c.

Life is all a variorum,
 We regard not how it goes;
 Let them cant about decorum
 Who have characters to lose.
 A fig, &c.

Here's to budgets, bags, and wallets!
 Here's to all the wandering train!
 Here's our ragged brats and callets!
 One and all cry out—Amen!

A fig for those by law protected!
 Liberty's a glorious feast!
 Courts for cowards were erected,
 Churches built to please the priest.

[This remarkable poem was written in the year 1785, but not published by the poet. It first saw the light in a small volume, printed

* (Homer is universally allowed to be the oldest ballad-singer on record.)

in 1801, at Glasgow, under the title of "Poems ascribed to Robert Burns, the Ayr-shire Bard." It is founded on the Poet's observation of an actual scene which one night met his eye, when, in company with his friends John Richmond, and James Smith, he dropped accidentally, at a late hour, into a very humble inn, in Mauchline, the landlady of which was a Mrs. Gibson,—more familiarly named Poosie Nancy. After witnessing much jollity amongst a company, who by day appeared abroad as miserable beggars, the three young men came away; Burns professing to have been greatly delighted with the scene, but particularly with the gleesome behaviour of an old maimed soldier. In the course of a few days, he recited a part of the poem to Richmond, who has stated that, to the best of his recollection, it contained, in its original complete form, songs by a sweep and a sailor, which do not now appear. The landlady of the house was mother to Racer Jess, alluded to in the *Holy Fair*, and her house was at the left hand side of the opening of the *Cowgate*, mentioned in the same poem, and opposite to the church.

"The original manuscript was long in the hands of John Richmond of Mauchline, and he remembers taking the song of 'Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou,' with him to Edinburgh, in 1786; it was given by the poet himself to Mr. Woodburn, factor to the laird of Craigengillan. It afterwards came into the possession of Thomas Stewart, of Greenock, bookseller, by whom a fac-simile of it was published. Mr. Stewart died in November, 1824, and the MS. then became the property of Mr. Lumsden, of Glasgow. The song of 'For a' that, an' a' that,' sung by the bard, is inserted, with some slight modifications, in Johnson's Musical Museum.

"The change-house of Poosie Nansie, where the scene is laid, stood in Mauchline, and was the favourite resort of lame sailors, maimed soldiers, wandering tinkers, travelling ballad-singers, and all such loose companions as hang about the skirts of society. Smith, the 'slee and pawkie thief' of the Epistle, accompanied Burns into Nansie's howff one night, and saw the scene, which the Poet has rendered immortal.—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM."

"The Jolly Beggars, for humorous description and nice discrimination of character, is inferior to no poem of the same length in the whole range of English poetry. The scene, indeed, is laid in the very lowest department of low life, the actors being a set of strolling vagrants, met to carouse and barter their rags and plunder for liquor in a hedge ale-house. Yet, even in describing the movements of such a group, the native taste of the Poet has never suffered his pen to slide into anything coarse or disgusting. The extravagant glee and outrageous frolic of

the beggars are ridiculously contrasted with their maimed limbs, rags and crutches; the sordid and squalid circumstances of their appearance are judiciously thrown into the shade.

"Nor is the art of the Poet less conspicuous in the individual figures than in the general mass. The festive vagrants are distinguished from each other by personal appearance and character, as much as any fortuitous assembly in the higher orders of life. The group, it must be observed, is of Scottish character: yet the distinctions are too well marked to escape even the southron. The most prominent persons are a maimed soldier and his female companion, a hackneyed follower of the camp; a stroller, late the consort of a Highland ketterer or sturdy beggar,—'but weary fa' the wae fu' woodie!' Being now at liberty, she becomes an object of rivalry between a 'pigmy scraper with his fiddle' and a strolling tinker. The latter, a desperate bandit, like most of his profession, terrifies the musician out of the field, and is preferred by the damsel, of course. A wandering ballad-singer, with a brace of doxies, is last introduced upon the stage. Each of these mendicants sing a song in character; and such a collection of humorous lyrics, connected with vivid poetical description, is not, perhaps, to be paralleled in the English language. The concluding ditty, chaunted by the ballad-singer at the request of the company, whose 'mirth and fun have now grown fast and furious,' and set them above all sublunary terrors of jails, and whipping-posts, is certainly far superior to any thing in the Beggar's Opera, where alone we could expect to find its parallel!

"In one or two passages of the *Jolly Beggars*, the muse has slightly trespassed on decorum, where, in the language of Scottish song,

'High kilted was she,
As she gaed owre the lea.'

Something, however, is to be allowed to the nature of the subject, and something to the education of the poet: and if from veneration to the names of Swift and Dryden, we tolerate the grossness of the one, and the indelicacy of the other, the respect due to that of Burns may surely claim indulgence for a few light strokes of broad humour.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.]

"Such a motley group of vagrants as Burns has so happily described may yet be found in many districts of Scotland. There are houses of rendezvous where the maimed, supplicating soldier—the travelling, ballad-singing fiddler—the sturdy wench, with hands ever ready to steal the pittance which is not bestowed—the rough, black-bearded tinker, with his soldering-irons and pike-staff—and other children of real or pretended misfortune, assemble on a Saturday night to pawn their stolen clothes, dispose of their begged meal, and on their produce to hold merriment and revelry."—CROMEK.

"One o' that sturdy class of mendicants, so well painted by both poet and annotator, is still remembered in Nithsdale by the name of 'Auld Penpont.' This provincial worthy was a fellow of infinite drollery and rustic talent: he had a grave speech for the serious—could sing a psalm or pray upon occasion with the devout; but when he met with the young and the thoughtless, he was another man. He told wild stories, chanted wilder songs, and sometimes laid his wallets aside and performed a sort of rustic interlude, called 'Auld Glenae,' with no little spirit and feeling."—CUNNINGHAM.

Death and Doctor Hornbook.

A TRUE STORY.*

SOME books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd:
Ev'n ministers, they ha'e been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid, at times,† to vend,
And nail't wi' Scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befel,
Is just as true's the Deil's in h-ll
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel
's a muckle pity.

The Clachan yill had made me canty,
I was na fou, but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent ay
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, and bushes, kenn'd ay
Frae ghaists an' witches.

The rising moon began to glow'¹
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,

I set mysel;
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.

I was come round about the hill,
And todlin' down on Willie's mill,†
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker:
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

I there wi' something did forgather,
That put me in an erie swither;
An' awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouter,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three tae'd leister on the ither
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava;
And then, its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma',
As cheeks o' branks.

"Guid-e'en," quo' I; "Friend! hae ye been
When ither folk are busy sawin'?"‡ [mawin',
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak;
At length, says I, "Friend, whare ye gaun,
Will ye go back?"

It spak right howe,— "My name is Death,
But be na fley'd."—Quoth I, "Guid haith,
Ye're maybe come to stap my breath;
But tent me, billie;
I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith,
See, there's a gully!"

"Guidman," quo' he, "put up your whittle,
I'm no design'd to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle
To be mislear'd,
I wad na mind it, no that spittle
Out-owre my beard."

* [In a note to the copy of his works presented to Dr. Geddes, the Poet says, "the hero of the poem is John Wilson, schoolmaster, in Tarbolton. This gentleman, Dr. Hornbook, is professionally a brother of the sovereign order of the ferula, but by intuition and inspiration, he is at once apothecary, surgeon, and physician."—R. B.]

† "Death and Dr. Hornbook, though not published in the Kilmarnock edition, was produced early in the year 1785. The schoolmaster of Tarbolton parish, to eke out the scanty subsistence allowed to that useful class of men, set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised that advice would be given, in common disorders, at the shop, gratis. Robert was at a mason-meeting in Tarbolton, when the Dominie made too ostentatious a display of his medical skill. As he parted in the evening from this mixture of pedantry and physic, at the place where he describes his meeting with Death, one of those floating ideas of apparitions mentioned in his letter to Dr. Moore, crossed his mind; this set him to work for the rest of his way home. These circumstances he related when he repeated

the verses to me the next afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me."

GILBERT BURNS.

[On his way home, it is said, the Poet found a neighbour lying tipy by the road-side: the idea of Death flashed on his fancy, and, seating himself on the parapet of a bridge, he composed the Poem, fell asleep, and, when awakened by the morning sun, he recollected it all, and wrote it down on reaching Mossiel. This took place in the seed-season of 1785, and an epidemical disorder was then raging in the country. Wilson soon afterwards quitted Tarbolton, and repairing to Glasgow engaged in mercantile pursuits, and achieved a moderate independence. He is much respected for his religious feelings and his private worth.]

† [V.A.R. Great lies and nonsense baith.—MS.]

‡ [Tarbolton Mill, situated on the rivulet Faile, about two hundred yards to the east of the village, on the road to Mossiel; then occupied by William Muir, an intimate friend of the Burns family—hence called *Willie's mill*. "Mr. William Muir, Tarbolton Mill," appears amongst the subscribers to the Edinburgh edition of the poems, in which the above piece first appeared.]

§ [This rencounter happened in seed-time, 1785.—R. B.]

"Weel, weel!" says I, "a bargain be't;
Come, gies your hand, an' sae we're gree't
We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat,
Come, gies your news;
This while* ye hae been mony a gate,
At mony a house."

"Ay, ay!" quo' he, an shook his head,
"It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
Sin' I began to nick the thread,
An' choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread,
An' sae maun Death."

"Sax thousand years are near hand fled
Sin' I was to the butchering bred,
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
To stap or scar me;
Till ane Hornbook's ta'en up the trade,
An' faith, he'll waur me."

"Ye ken Jock Hornbook i' the Clachan,
Deil mak his king's-hood in a spleuchan!
He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' Buchan†
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin'
And pouk my hips."

"See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,
They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;
But Doctor Hornbook, wi' his art
And curs'd skill,
Has made them baith no worth a —,
Damn'd haet they'll kill."

"'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gaen
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
But-deil-ma-care,
It just play'd dirl on the bane,
But did nae mair."

"Hornbook was by, wi' ready art,
And had sae fortify'd the part,
That when I looked to my dart,
It was sae blunt,
Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart
Of a kail-runt."

"I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I near-hand cowpit wi' my hurry,
But yet the bauld Apothecary
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae try'd a quarry
O' hard whin rock."

"Ev'n them he canna get attended,
Although their face he ne'er had kenn'd it,
Just — in a kail-blade, and send it,
As soon's he smells't,
Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
At once he tells't."

"And then a' doctor's saws and whittles,
Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles
He's sure to hae:
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C."

"Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
True sal-marinum o' the seas;
The farina of beans and pease,
He has't in plenty;
Aqua-fortis, what you please,
He can content ye."

"Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
Urinus spiritus of capons;
Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distill'd *per se*;
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail clippings,
And mony mae."

"Waes me for Johnny Ged's Hole † now
Quo' I, "If that thae news be true!
His braw calf-ward whare gowans grew,
Sae white and bonnie,
Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plow;
They'll ruin Johnnie!"

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh,
And says, "Ye need na yoke the plough,
Kirk-yards will soon be till'd enough,
Tak ye nae fear:
They'll a' be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh
In twa-three year."

"Whare I kill'd ane a fair strae death,
By loss o' blood or want of breath,
This night I'm free to tak my aith,
That Hornbook's skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith,
By drap an' pill."

"An honest wabster to his trade,
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel-bred,
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair;
The wife slade cannie to her bed,
But ne'er spak mair."

"A countra laird had ta'en the batts,
Or some curmurring in his guts,
His only son for Hornbook sets,
An' pays him well.
The lair, for twa guid gimmer-pets,
Was laird himsel'."

"A bonnie lass, ye kenn'd her name,§
Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame:
She trusts hersel', to hide the shame,
In Hornbook's care;
Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,
To hide it there."

* [An epidemical fever was then raging in that country. R. B.]
† [Buchan's Domestic Medicine.] R. B.

‡ [The grave-digger.] R. B.
§ [She was an inn-keeper's daughter.]

"That's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way ;
 Thus goes he on from day to day,
 Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
 An's weel paid for't ;
 Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
 Wi' his damn'd dirt :

"But, hark ! I'll tell you of a plot,
 Tho' dinna ye be speaking o't ;
 I'll nail the self-conceited sot,
 As dead's a herrin' :
 Neist time we meet, I'll wad a groat,
 He gets his fairin' !"

But just as he began to tell,
 The auld kirk-hammer strak' the bell
 Some wee short hour ayont the twal,
 Which rais'd us baith :
 I took the way that pleas'd mysel',
 And sae did Death.

[“At Glasgow I heard that the hero of this exquisite satire was living ; Hamilton managed to introduce me to him—we talked of almost all subjects save the poems of Burns. Dr. Hornbook is above the middle size, stout made, and inclining to corpulency. His complexion is swarthy, his eye black and expressive: he wears a brown wig and dresses in black. There is little or nothing of the pedant about him: I think a man who had never read the poem would scarcely discover any. Burns, I am told, had no personal enmity to Wilson.”

CROMEK.]

[“When Burns wrote his story of ‘Death and Dr. Hornbook,’ he had very rarely been intoxicated, or perhaps much exhilarated by liquor. Yet how happily does he lead his reader into that track of sensations! and with what lively humour does he describe the disorder of his senses and the confusion of his understanding, put to test by his deliberate attempt to count the horns of the moon!—

'But whether she had three or four
 He couldna tell.'

Behold a sudden apparition which disperses this disorder, and in a moment chills him into possession of himself! Coming upon no more important mission than the grisly phantom was charged with, what mode of introduction could have been more efficient or appropriate?"

WORDSWORTH.]

[“In the neighbourhood of Tarbolton is situated the farm of Lochlea, where the Poet

* Burns composed or completed this poem in Dumfriesshire, about August 1789, with reference to a case then pending in the church courts of his native district. Dr. William M'Gill, one of the two ministers conjoined in the parochial charge of Ayr, had published, in 1786, *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, in two parts, containing, 1, the History, 2, the Doctrine of his Death*, which was supposed to inculcate principles of both Arian and Socinian character, and provoked many severe censures from the more rigid party of the church. M'Gill remained silent

lived, as a humble denizen of his father's household, from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth year of his age. This, of course, was the clachan to which at that period he resorted for the pleasures of society. He formed here, in 1780, a club of young men, who met monthly, for mutual improvement and entertainment, and of which he and his brother poet, David Sillar, were the leading members: the utmost extent of expenditure on any night was three-pence. Here, also, was a lodge of freemasons, which he delighted to attend, and to whom he wrote a farewell, incorporated in his poems. The lodge still exists, and possesses among its records many letters from Burns, some written long after he was locally dissevered from the association, but still breathing an intense interest in its concerns. It was after attending a meeting of this lodge that he wrote his poem entitled ‘Death and Doctor Hornbook,’ the object of which was to burlesque the school-master, who had offended him that night in the course of argument.

“Hornbook is said to have been a man of ability and education superior to his situation, and his services as a dispenser of medicines must have been useful, as there was then no professional man in the village, nor within many miles of it. He afterwards left the place, in consequence of a dispute about salary with the heritors, and settled in Glasgow, where he rose to be session-clerk of the Gorbals, and is still (1838) alive. He has often been heard over his bowl of punch in the Salt-market to bless the day on which he provoked the castigation of Burns. He was for a long while much missed at Tarbolton, there not being another vender of salts and senna-leaves in the whole country round, nor any medical advice, whatever. There are now three regular doctors in Tarbolton.”—CHAMBERS.]

The Kirk's Alarm.*

A SATIRE.

A BALLAD TUNE.—PUSH ABOUT THE BRISK BOWL.

I.

ORTHODOX, orthodox,†
 Wha believe in John Knox,
 Let me sound an alarm to your conscience,
 There's a heretic blast
 Has been blawn i' the wast,
 That what is not sense must be nonsense.

under the attacks of his opponents, till Dr. William Peebles of Newton-upon-Ayr, a neighbour, and hitherto a friend, in preaching a centenary sermon on the Revolution, November 5, 1788, denounced the Essay as heretical, and the author as one who “with one hand received the privileges of the church, while, with the other, he was endeavouring to plunge the keenest poignard into her heart.” M'Gill published a defence, which led, in April 1789, to the introduction of the

† VAB. Brother Scots, brother Scots.—MS.

II.

Doctor Mac,* Doctor Mac,
Ye should stretch on a rack,
To strike evil doers† wi' terror;
To join faith and sense
Upon ony pretence,
Is heretic, damnable error.

III.

Town of Ayr, town of Ayr,†
It was mad, I declare,
To meddle wi' mischief a-brewing;
Provost John§ is still deaf
To the church's relief,
And orator Bob|| is its ruin.

IV.

D'rymple mild,¶ D'rymple mild,
Tho' your heart's like a child.
And your life like the new driven snaw
Yet that winna save ye,
Auld Satan must have ye,
For preaching that three's ane an' twa.

V.

Rumble John,** Rumble John,
Mount the steps wi' a groan,
Cry the book is wi' heresy cramm'd;
Then lug out your ladle,
Deal brimstone like adle,
And roar ev'ry note of the damn'd.

VI.

Simper James,†† Simper James,
Leave the fair Killie dames,
There's a holier chace in your view;
I'll lay on your head,
That the pack ye'll soon lead,
For puppies like you there's but few.

VII.

Singet Sawney,†† Singet Sawney,
Are ye herding the penny,
Unconscious what evil§§ await?

case into the presbyterial court of Ayr, and subsequently into that of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. Meanwhile, the public out of doors was agitating the question with the keenest interest, and the strife of the liberal and zealous parties in the church had reached a painful extreme. It was now that Burns took up the pen in behalf of M'Gill, whom, it is probable, he sincerely looked on as a worthy and enlightened person suffering an unworthy persecution. The war raged, till, in April 1790, the case came on for trial before the synod, when M'Gill stopped further procedure, by giving in a document expressive of his deep regret for the disquiet he had occasioned, explaining the challenged passages of his book, and declaring his adherence to the standards of the church on the points of doctrine in question. Dr. M'Gill died March 30, 1807, at the age of seventy-six, and in the forty-sixth year of his ministry.—*Murray's Literary History of Galloway.*

* Dr. M'Gill.

† V.A.R. Wicked writers.

‡ [When Dr. M'Gill's case came before the Synod, the magistrates of Ayr published an advertisement in the newspapers, bearing a warm testimony in favour of the Doctor's character, and their appreciation of his services as a Pastor.]

§ [John Ballantine, Esq., provost of Ayr, the same individual to whom the *Twa Brigs* is dedicated.]

¶ [Mr. Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, to whom the *Cotter's Saturday Night* is inscribed. He exerted his powerful oratorical talents as agent for Dr. M'Gill in the presbytery and synod.]

¶ The Rev. Dr. William Dalrymple, senior minister of the Collegiate church of Ayr—a man of extraordinary meekness and worth. It is related of him, that one day meeting an

Wi' a jump, yell, and howl,
Alarm every soul,
For the foul thief||| is just at your gate.

VIII.

Daddy Auld,¶¶ Daddy Auld,
There's a tod in the fauld,
A tod meikle waur than the clerk;***
Though ye can do little skaiith,†††
Ye'll be in at the death,
And if ye canna bite, ye can bark.

IX.

Davie Bluster,††† Davie Bluster,
If for a saunt ye do muster,
The corps is no nice of redruits;
Yet to worth let's be just,
Royal blood ye might boast,
If the ass was the king of the brutes.

X.

Jamie Goose,§§§ Jamie Goose,|||
Ye ha'e made but toom roose,
In hunting the wicked lieutenant;
But the doctor's your mark,
For the L—d's haly ark;
He has cooper'd and ca'd a wrang pin in't.

XI.

Poet Willie,¶¶¶ Poet Willie,
Gi'e the Doctor a volley,
Wi' your "liberty's chain" and your wit;
O'er Pegasus' side
Ye ne'er laid a stride,
Ye but smelt, man, the place where he——****

XII.

Andro Gouk,†††† Andro Gouk,
Ye may slander the book,
And the book nane the waur, let me tell ye;
Tho' ye're rich, and look big,
Yet lay by hat and wig,
And ye'll ha'e a calf's head o' sma' value.

almost naked beggar in the country, he took off his coat and waistcoat—gave the latter to the poor man, then put on his coat, buttoned it up, and walked home. He died in 1814, after having fulfilled his pastoral duties for sixty-eight years.

** The Rev. John Russell, celebrated in the *Holy Fair*.

†† The Rev. James M'Kinn, the hero of the *Ordination*.

†† The Rev. Alexander Moodie, of Riccarton, one of the heroes of the *Twa Herds*.

§§ V.A.R. Danger.

|| V.A.R. For Hannibal's. MS.

¶¶ The Rev. Mr. Auld, of Mauchline.

*** The clerk was Mr. Gavin Hamilton, whose defence against the charges preferred by Mr. Auld had occasioned much trouble to this clergyman.

††† V.A.R. Douglas, Heron, and Co.

Has e'en laid you fu' low.—MS.

††† Mr. Grant, Ochiltree.

§§§ V.A.R. Billie.—MS.

||| Mr. Young, of Cumnock.

¶¶¶ The Rev. Dr. Peebles by a line in a poem on the Centenary of the Revolution:

"And bound in Liberty's endearing chain."

The poetry of this gentleman is said to have been indifferent. He translated the *Davidels* of Cowley, which some of his brethren, not exactly understanding what was meant, took the liberty of calling *Dr. Peebles's Devil's Ideas*.

**** V.A.R. Ye only stood by where he —.—MS.

†††† Dr. Andrew Mitchell, Monkton. He was so rich as to be able to keep his carriage. Extreme love of money, and a strange confusion of ideas, characterised this presbyter. Is

XIII.

Barr Steenie,* Barr Steenie,
What mean ye, what mean ye?
If ye'll meddle nae mair wi' the matter,
Ye may ha'e some pretence
To havins and sense,
Wi' people wha ken ye nae better.

XIV.

Irvine side,† Irvine side,
Wi' your turkey-cock pride,
O' manhood but sma' is your share,
Ye've the figure, 'tis true,
Even your faes will allow,
And your friends they daur grant you nae mair.

XV.

Muirland Jock,‡ Muirland Jock,
When the L—d makes a rock
To crush Common Sense for her sins,
If ill manners were wit,
There's no mortal so fit
To confound the poor Doctor at ance.

XVI.

Holy Will,§ Holy Will,
There was wit i' your skull,
When ye pilfer'd the alms o' the poor;
The timmer is scant,
When ye're ta'en for a saunt,
Wha should swing in a rape for an hour.

XVII.

Calvin's sons, Calvin's sons,
Seize your sp'ritual guns,
Ammunition you never can need;
|| Your hearts are the stuff,
Will be powther enough,
And your skulls are a storehouse o' lead.

XVIII.

Poet Burns, Poet Burns,
Wi' your priest-skelping turns,
Why desert ye your auld native shire?
Your muse is a gipsie,
E'en tho' she were tipsie,
She could ca' us nae waur than we are.

[In the second version the Poet adds the following POSTSCRIPT.

Afton's Laird, Afton's Laird,¶
When your pen can be spar'd
A copy o' this I bequeath,

his prayer for the royal family, he would express himself thus:—"Bless the King—his Majesty the Queen—her Majesty the Prince of Wales." The word chemistry he pronounced in three different ways—hemistry, shemistry, and tchemistry—but never, by any chance, in the right way. Notwithstanding the antipathy he could scarcely help feeling towards Burns, one of the Poet's comic verses would make him laugh heartily, and confess that, "after all, he was a droll fellow."

* Rev. Stephen Young, Barr.

† Rev. Mr. George Smith, Galston. This gentleman is praised as friendly to common sense in the *Holy Fair*. The offence which was taken at that praise probably embittered the poet against him. In another version he is styled "Cessnockside."

‡ Mr. John Shepherd, Muirkirk. The statistical account of Muirkirk contributed by this gentleman to Sir John Sinclair's work is very agreeably written. He had, however, an unfortunate habit of saying rude things, which he mis-

On the same sicker score

I mention'd before,

To that trust auld worthy Clackleeth.**]

[The history of the kirk's alarm is curious:—"Macgill and Dalrymple, the two ministers of the town of Ayr, had long been suspected of entertaining heterodox opinions on several points, particularly the doctrine of Original Sin and the Trinity; and the former at length published an essay, which was considered as demanding the notice of the church courts. More than a year was spent in the discussions which arose out of this: and at last, Dr. Macgill was fain to acknowledge his errors, and promise that he would take an early opportunity of apologizing for them to his congregation from the pulpit, which promise, however, he never performed. The gentry of the country took, for the most part, the side of Macgill, who was a man of cold unpopular manners, but of unrepented moral character, and possessed of some accomplishments, though certainly not of distinguished talents. The bulk of the lower orders espoused, with far more fervid zeal, the cause of those who conducted the prosecution against this erring doctor. Gavin Hamilton, and all persons of his stamp, were, of course, on the side of Macgill—Auld and the Mauchline elders, with his enemies. Robert Aiken, a writer in Ayr, a man of remarkable talents, particularly in public speaking, had the principal management of Macgill's cause before the Presbytery, and the Synod. He was an intimate friend of Hamilton, and through him had about this time formed an acquaintance which soon ripened into a warm friendship with Burns. Burns was, therefore, from the beginning, a zealous, as in the end he was, perhaps, the most effective, partizan of the side on which Aiken had staked so much of his reputation."—LOCKHART.]

The eloquence of Aiken and the wit of Hamilton were deeply felt and resented by the partizans of the Old Light. The hue and cry against the latter drew these words of condolence from Burns:—"You have erred—you have committed the blasphemous heresies of squaring religion by the rules of common sense,

took for wit, and thus laid himself open to the satire of the Poet. In the second version this verse commences thus:—

Muirland George, Muirland George,

Whom the L—d made a scourge,

To claw Common Sense for her sins.

§ The poor elder in Mauchline, William Fisher, whom Burns has so often scourged.

¶ With real battle powder,

Be sure double load her,

And the bullet's Divinity lead.

¶ John Logan, Esq. of Afton.

** In the second version of "The Kirk's Alarm" which the Poet sent to Major Logan, the only material variation which he introduces is the repetition of the half of the first and the whole of the last line of each stanza, thus, after Stanza XVIII.:—

Poet Burns

She cou'd ca' us nae waur than we are.

and attempting to give a consistent character to Almighty God, and a rational account of his proceedings with the sons of men."

"Mr. Hamilton lived in what is still called the castle of Mauchline—a half-fortified old mansion near the church, forming the only remains of the ancient priory. He was the son of a gentleman who had practised the same profession in the same place, and was, in every respect, a most estimable member of society—generous, affable, and humane. Unfortunately, his religious practice did not square with the notions of the then minister of Mauchline, the 'Daddy Auld' of Burns' Poem, who, in 1785, is found in the session-records to have summoned him for rebuke, on the four following charges:—1. Unnecessary absence from church, for five consecutive Sundays; 2. Setting out on a journey to Carrick on a Sunday; 3. Habitual, if not total, neglect of family worship; 4. Writing an abusive letter to the session in reference to some of their former proceedings respecting him. Strange though this prosecution may seem, it was strictly accordant with the right assumed by clergymen at that period to inquire into the private habits of parishioners."—CHAMBERS.]

"Polemical divinity," says the Poet at this period to Dr. Moore, "was putting the country half-mad, and I, ambitious of shining in conversation parties on Sundays, at funerals, &c., used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion that I raised the hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour."

The Two Herds:

OR,
THE HOLY TULZIE.*

Blockheads with reason wicked wits abhor,
But fool with fool is barbarous civil war.—POPE.

O' a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep you frae the fox,
Or worrying tykes,
Or wha will tent the wails and crocks,
About the dykes?

The twa best herds in a' the wast,
That e'er ga'e gospel horn a blast,
These five and twenty† simmers past,
O! dool to tell,
Ha'e had a bitter black out-cast
Atween themsel.

* [This satirical ballad first appeared in the Glasgow collection of those pieces which had either been rejected by the fastidious taste of Dr. Currie, or had escaped his notice. It has been collated with a copy in his own hand-writing.]

† VAR. Fifty.—MS.

‡ VAR.—Fountain-head.—MS.

§ Russell is described as a "large, robust, dark complexioned man, imperturbably grave, fierce of temper, and of a stern expression of countenance." He preached with much vehemence and at the height of a tremendous voice, which, in certain states of the atmosphere, caught the ear at

O, Moodie, man, and wordy Russell,
How could you raise so vile a bustle,
Ye'll see how New-Light herds will whistle,

And think it fine:
The Lord's cause ne'er gat sic a twistie
Sin' I ha'e min'.

O, sirs! whae'er wad hae expeckit,
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,
Ye wha were ne'er by lairds respeckit,
To wear the plaid,
But by the brutes themselves cleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank?
Nae poison'd sour Arminian stank,
He let them taste.
Frae Calvin's well, aye clear,‡ they drank,
O sic a feast!

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock, and tod,
Weel kenn'd his voice thro' a' the wood,
He smelt their ilka hole and road,
Baith out and in,
And weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
And sell their skin.

What herd like Russell§ tell'd his tale,
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,
He kenn'd the Lord's sheep, ilka tail,
O'er a' the height,
And saw gin they were sick or hale,
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling|| the gospel club,
And New-light herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin;
Could shake them owre the burning dub,
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't,
Sic famous twa should disagree't,
An' names, like "villain," "hypocrite,"
Ilk ither g'en,
While New-Light herds,¶ wi' laughin' spite,
Say neither's lein'!

A' ye wha tent the gospel fauld,
There's Duncan,** deep, and Peebles, shaul,††
But chiefly thou, apostle‡‡ Auld,§§
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, het and cauld,
Till they agree.|||

the distance of more than a mile. He subsequently became minister at Stirling, where he died at an advanced age.

§ VAR.—Swing.—MS.

¶ VAR.—Enemies.

** Dr. Robert Duncan, Minister of Dundonald. Excepting in his limbs, which were short, he bore a strong personal resemblance to Charles James Fox.

†† Rev. William Peebles, of Newton-upon-Ayr. See notes to *Holy Fair and Kirk's Alarm*.

‡‡ Rev. William Auld, Minister of Mauchline.

§§ VAR.—"And chiefly gird thee, 'postie Auld!'"—MS.

|| VAR.—"To gar them gree."—MS.

Consider, sirs, how we're beset;
 There's scarce a new herd that we get
 But comes frae 'mang that cursed set
 I winna name;
 I hope frae heav'n* to see them yet
 In fiery flame.

Dalrymple† has been lang our fae,
 M'Gill‡ has wrought us meikle wae,
 And that curs'd rascal ca'd M'Quhae,§
 And baith the Shaws,||
 That aft hae made us black and blae,
 Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld Wodrow¶ lang has hatch'd mischief,
 We thought aye** death wad bring relief,
 But he has gotten, to our grief,
 Ane to succeed him,
 A chiel wha'll soundly buff our beef;
 I meikle dread him.

And mony a ane that I could tell,
 Wha fain would openly rebel,
 Forbye turn-coats amang oursel,
 There's Smith for ane,
 I doubt he's but a grey-nick quill,
 And that ye'll fin'.

O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
 By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
 Come, join your counsel and your skills
 To cove the lairds,
 And get the brutes the powers themselves
 To choose their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
 And Learning in a woody dance,
 And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,
 That bites sae sair,
 Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
 Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's and Dalrymple's eloquence,
 M'Gill's close nervous excellence,
 M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,
 And guid M'Math,
 Wi' Smith, wha thro' the heart can glance,
 May a' pack aff.

"The first of my poetic offspring that saw
 the light," says Burns to Dr. Moore, "was a

burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but, to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause."

[The two herds were—Moodie, Minister of Riccarton, and Russell, assistant to the Minister of Kilmarnock, who afterwards had a harmonious call to Stirling. "They were apostles of the Old Light, but this did not hinder controversy, and whilst indulging in a discussion on Effectual Calling, on their way home from the Monday sermon of a Sacrament, they quarrelled by the way, and, as some assert, proceeded to blows. The first intimation which the world of Kyle had of this 'bitter black outcast' was from Russell himself, who was seen approaching the house of Barleith at full gallop.—'Wha can this be, riding in sic a daft-like manner?' exclaimed one.—'It's awfu' like our ain minister, honest man;' said another.—'That can never be,' said John Parker, a decorous man and an elder—'and yet it's him. Na, I'll no believe my ain een!' The doubts of this elder were cut short by the minister himself halting, and explaining the cause of his galloping. On inquiring long afterwards of a person, who was present with Parker, what Russell said, he replied that he heard him say something about the unsound doctrine of Moodie; how that het words ensued, and he was obliged to give his brother's horse a crack across the nose to put it and its rider back.—'But ye wadna believe me now, if I were to tell you that I think he missed the horse, and hit the minister. Black Russell was na sparing!']

"At the time when Burns was beginning to exercise his powers as a poet, theological controversy raged amongst the clergy and laity of his native country. The prominent parts related to the doctrines of original sin and the Trinity; a scarcely subordinate one referred to the right of patronage. Burns took the moderate and liberal side, and seems to have de-

* VAR.—"I trust in Heav'n."—MS.

† Rev. Dr. Dalrymple, one of the ministers of Ayr. He died in 1814, having enjoyed his charge for the uncommon period of sixty-eight years.

‡ Rev. William M'Gill, one of the ministers of Ayr, and the colleague of Dr. Dalrymple.

§ Minister of St. Quivox, an enlightened man and elegant preacher. He has been succeeded in the parish by his son.

|| Dr. Andrew Shaw of Craigie, and Dr. David Shaw of Coynton. Dr. Andrew was a man of excellent abilities, but extremely diffident—a fine speaker and an accomplished scholar. Dr. David, in personal respects, was a prodigy.

¶ He was ninety-one years of age before he required an assistant. At that period of life he read without the use of glasses, wrote a neat small hand and had not a furrow in his cheek or a wrinkle in his brow. He was moderator of the General Assembly in 1775. He had a fine old clergymanlike kind of wit. In the house of a man of rank, where he once spent the

night, an alarm took place after midnight, which brought all the members of the family from their dormitories. The doctor encountered a countess in her chemise, which occasioned some mutual confusion. At breakfast, next morning, a lady asked him what he thought when he met the countess in the lobby. "Oh, my lady," said he, "I was in a *trance*." Trance, in Scotland, signifies a passage or vestibule, as well as a swoon. This amiable man died, April 26, 1810, in the ninety-second year of his age, and sixty-first of his ministry. —R. CHAMBERS.

¶ There were three brothers of this name, descended from the church historian, and all ministers—one at Eastwood, their ancestor's charge, the second at Stevenston, and the third, Dr. Peter Wodrow, at Tarbolton. Dr. Peter is the person named in the poem. The assistant and successor mentioned in the verse was the Rev. Mr. M'Math, to whom the poet addressed one of his epistles.

** VAR.—"Trusted."—MS.

lighted in doing all he could to torment the zealous party, who were designated the *Auld Light*. They appear to have afterwards quarrelled about a question of parish boundaries; and when the point was debated in the Presbytery of Irvine, in presence of a great multitude of the people (including Burns), they lost temper entirely, and 'abused each other,' says Mr. Lockhart, 'with a fiery vehemence of personal invective such as has been long banished from all popular assemblies, wherein the laws of courtesy are enforced by those of a certain unwritten code.'

"These satiric sallies were not unavenged. Burns was called unbeliever, profane scoffer, and ungodly rhym-er—epithets of influence in those days: and it was moreover represented that the Bachelors' Club of Mauchline, where the poet presided, met for other than moral purposes. Their language was reported, as loose, their toasts indecorous, and one of the elders, it is said, having caught up two or three wild stanzas, scattered by Burns at one of those mirthful meetings, kept repeating them wherever he went, saying, at the end of every verse, 'Oh, what a wild lad! A lost sheep—a lost sheep!'"—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.]

Holy Willie's Prayer.*

O THOU, wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,
Sends aye to heaven, and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here, afore thy sight,
For gifts an' grace,
A burnin' an' a shinin' light
To a' this place.

* Kennedy gives the following account of the origin of "Holy Willie's Prayer."—Gavin Hamilton, Esq., Clerk of Ayr, the Poet's friend and benefactor, was accused one Sunday morning by a mendicant, who begged alms of him. Not recollecting that it was the sabbath, Hamilton set the man to work in his garden, which lay on the public road, and the poor fellow was discovered by the people on their way to the kirk, and they immediately stoned him from the ground. For this offence, Mr. Hamilton was not permitted to have a child christened, which his wife bore him soon afterwards, until he applied to the synod. His most officious opponent was William Fisher, one of the elders of the Church: and to revenge the insult to his friend, Burns made him the subject of this humorous ballad.

It was no doubt to this satire that the subjoined *jeu d'esprit* refers.

"In the name of the Nine, Amen.

"We, Robert Burns, by virtue of a warrant from na'ure, bearing date the twenty-fifth day of January, anno domini, one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine, poet laureate and bard in chief, in and over the districts and countries of Kyle, Cunningham, and Carrick, of old extent, to our trusty and well-beloved William Chalmers and John Mc Adam, students

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation?
I, wha deserve sic just damnation,
For broken laws,
Five thousand years' fore my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause,

When frae my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plung'd me into hell.
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin' lake,
Whare damned devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to a stake.

Yet I am here a chosen sample;
To show thy grace is great and ample;
I'm here a pillar in thy temple,
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler, an example,
To a' thy flock.

[O L—d, thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, and swearers swear,
And singing there, and dancing here,
Wi' great and sma';
For I am keepit by thy fear,
Free frae them a'.]

But yet, O L—d! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust;
And sometimes, too, wi' worldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd in sin.

[O L—d! yestreen, thou kens, wi' Meg—
Thy pardon I sincerely beg,
O may it ne'er be a livin' plague
To my dishonour,
And I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
Again upon her.]

Besides, I farther maun avow,
Wi' Lizzie's lass, three times I trow—
But, L—d, that Friday I was fou',

and practitioners in the ancient and mysterious science of confounding right and wrong.

"Right trusty,

"Be it known unto you, that whereas, in the course of our care and watchings over the order and police of all and sundry the manufacturers, retainers and venders of poesy; bards, poets, poetasters, rhymers, jinglers, songsters, ballad-singers, &c. &c. male and female— we have discovered a certain nefarious, abominable and wicked song, or ballad, a copy whereof we have her enclosed; our will, therefore, is, that ye pitch upon and appoint the most execrable individual of that most execrable species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nickname of the Deil's Yeld Nowte; and after having caused him to kindle a fire at the cross of Ayr, ye shall, at noontide of the day, put into the said wretch's merciless hands, the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked song, to be consumed by fire in the presence of all beholders, in abhorrence of, and terror to, all such compositions and composers. And this in no wise leave ye undone, but have it executed in every point as this our mandate bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when in person we hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.

"Given at Mauchline, this twentieth day of November anno domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.

"God save the Bard!"

